THE

HISTORY

OF

JULIA BENSON,

IN

A SERIES OF LETTERS;

FOUNDED ON WELL-KNOWN FACTS.

TENDING

To Guard the MIND from the

INDULGENCE of UNLAWFUL PLEASURES,

And the FATAL EFFECTS of

FEMALE RESENTMENT.

Felix quem faciunt aliena pericula cautum!

VOL. I.

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THE HISTORY OF JULIA BENSON.

LETTER I.

Mr. MELVILL, to Mr. FREDERICK.

Dear Charles,

DO you remember the bett I made with Menill on taking a walk of half an hour, in ſearch of an honeſt man and a virtuous woman? The other day we made an excurſion, by way of trial, half in joke, which turned out more ſucceſsfully than we could have expected, and proved ſo extremely intereſting, that I ſhall, without further preface, give you the adventure.

At Charing-Croſs, Menill wanted me to turn down by Whitehall, and take a trip to St. Stephen's; but I poſitively inſiſted on the folly of going to that quarter in purſuit of virtue. So we kept ſtrait on to Pall-Mall, and had not taken many ſteps in that ſtreet, before we came over-againſt the hotel. In the paſſage of that houſe I remarked

a young lady, whoſe figure had ſomething ſtriking in it, with a face, beautiful in ſpite of tears, for ſhe was in viſible diſtreſs, and without any perſon near her. "Menill (ſaid I) here is an "object worth purſuing—by Heaven, that coun-"tenance cannot lye!" And immediately turning into the houſe, "Madam, you are in diſtreſs, can "I aſſiſt you?

"I am in diſtreſs God knows! but" ——

"For Heaven's ſake ſpeak, Madam!—What "is the matter? upon my honour, I am grieved "to ſee you weep."

"I know not what to do—could you ſhew me "the way to ſome houſe, at a diſtance from "this?"

"This inſtant, madam."

It immediately ſtruck me, that ſhe might perhaps be juſt come to town, and afraid of ſome purſuit or accident. I therefore beckoned ſome chairmen, put her into a chair, and ordered them to follow me directly to my houſe in Jermyn-Street. Menill I diſmiſſed—"This (ſaid I to "him) may prove an odd adventure, and you "might ſpoil the whole; call on me in the even-"ing." He took the hint, and left me.

As ſoon as the incognita was ſeated in my dining room, ſhe burſt into a flood of tears; nor could any thing I ſaid to her for ſome time ſtop her weeping—ſhe moved me with pity. I ſhould not forget to tell you, that her face, even in tears, had ſuch a ſweetneſs in it, that I was almoſt captivated with it; and yet thou well knoweſt that I am by no means a compleat whimperer. I addreſſed her ſeveral times, to which ſhe returned no anſwer.

"Doubtleſs, madam, you are alarmed at find-"ing yourſelf in the houſe of an utter ſtranger,

"and

" and with one who cannot perſuade you to un-
" ravel the particulars of your ſituation. Believe
" me, I ſincerely pity you—from my ſoul I do—
" depend upon the moſt ſacred honour, and, if
" neceſſary, the ſtricteſt ſecrecy."

" I am the moſt miſerable creature in the
" world."

" What is it that has made you ſo?"

" My tale, ſir, is a ſad one, and I have not
" time to tell it; beſides, where am I? Whither
" am I to go? Mercy on me, what a ſituation!"

" For God's ſake, madam, calm your grief,
" and condeſcend to make me acquainted with
" your condition, that I may know how to ſerve
" you."

" I can only tell you, ſir, that I am this mo-
" ment come to town—that I have fled from my
" father's houſe in the country—that I was going
" to the hotel, but ſtruck with I know not what
" tremour at the entrance, from the impropriety
" of my conduct, I was almoſt loſt in a cruel re-
" verie when you ſaw me."

" May I aſk you, madam, on what account
" you left your father, and from whence you are
" come?"

" This, ſir, was to have been my wedding day
" with a man I have every reaſon in the world to
" deteſt. My father was inexorable, and I found
" that I ſhould either be forced to marry the man
" I hated, or elſe muſt quit his houſe."

" You certainly acted with becoming ſpirit and
" prudence, to take time to reconcile yourſelf
" with your father, and at the ſame time eſcape a
" match ſo extremely diſagreeable to you. May
" I crave your name, madam?"

" My name, ſir, is Benſon; my father lives in
" Suſſex; where he has a conſiderable eſtate.

"The ſon of a neighbouring gentleman of for-
"tune, with whom he is in the cloſeſt intimacy,
"particularly in all their rural ſports, is the per-
"ſon he pitched upon for my huſband. He forced
"me to receive his viſits, which from the firſt I
"abhorred, as his character made him contemp-
"tible. He is a fox-hunter, avaricious to an ex-
"treme, and of brutal manners; I did and ſaid
"every thing to break off the deſign, but my
"efforts were without effect. Mr. Slingſby, for
"that is his name, would perſiſt in paying his
"addreſſes, though he found himſelf diſagreeable
"to me. This continued for ſome time, during
"which my father thought he had indulged me
"enough, and inſiſted poſitively on my marry-
"ing, and went ſo far as even to name the wed-
"ding day; by which I found myſelf obliged ei-
"ther to comply, or take the raſh ſtep which I
"have now done. Mr. Slingſby's motive for ad-
"dreſſing me, was neither affection for me, or
"friendſhip for my father, but covetouſneſs, in-
"creaſed by my father's declaration that he would
"add five thouſand pounds to the five which I
"have at my own diſpoſal."

"Your conduct, madam, will not admit of
"blame; you certainly acted wiſely; nor is it
"to be doubted but your father, unleſs he is loſt
"to every ſentiment of humanity, will be recon-
"ciled to you, and be convinced of his impru-
"dence."

"Never, ſir,—I know him too well, and
"ſhould not have taken ſuch a terrible reſolution,
"if any thing leſs than marriage with a man I
"deſpiſed, had not neceſſitated me to it. My
"father is paſſionate to exceſs, and has ſuch an
"idea of the duty of children towards their pa-
"rents, that I am very confident I have loſt him

"for

" for ever. But, ſir, what can I do with myſelf?
" —Whither am I to go? I cannot ſtay in Lon-
" don, unleſs I am quite a recluſe; for I ſhall be
" diſcovered by ſome of our neighbours in three
" days time, and my father, who is furious in his
" paſſion, will purſue me, and, I doubt not, bring
" on that vile match again."

" Pray, madam, make yourſelf perfectly eaſy
" on that head; command this houſe as your
" own—and conſider it as your aſylum."

" Excuſe me, ſir,—you are extremely gene-
" rous—but—it is impoſſible, ſir."—

" I underſtand your ſcruples, madam, but can
" remove them in a moment; my ſiſter keeps
" my houſe, ſhe is out at preſent, but will be at
" home by dinner, and, I am ſure, will do every
" thing in her power to make you as eaſy as poſ-
" ſible."

" You are infinitely obliging, ſir,—but I am
" quite aſhamed to think of taking ſo much
" liberty;—could you not hire me lodgings,
" which would prevent your having further trou-
" ble with ſo unfortunate a perſon as I am?"

" Name not any ſuch thing, madam: I ſhould
" be a brute indeed, to think any thing a trouble
" that would ſerve ſuch a lady as you in ſo much
" diſtreſs."

As you!—do you mind that, Frederick? And upon my credit, it was well put in; for my heart was too much intereſted to part with her ſo eaſily, her tears being dried, and her head dreſs not ſo much muffled up but I could more eaſily examine her ſhape, air, &c. She is not a beauty, but ten times more pleaſing: you look at her ſometime before you know whether ſhe is handſome or not, being neither pretty nor plain; but ſhe ſoon convinces you, by the moſt inſinuating charms, that

ſhe

ſhe was made for love. Her perſon is under the common ſize, elegant as poſſible, her grace, air, and manner touching, as the French ſay; her eyes have every expreſſion that fancy could give, they are thoſe of a languiſhing or a ſprightly beauty, with a ſomething in them that ſpeaks immediately to the heart. Her complexion as fine as poſſible; the reſt of her features have nothing in them, but as accompanyments of her expreſſion; for there is not a motion of her body, or a turn of her eye, but what is full of expreſſion.

Now, Frederick, this is an honeſt deſcription; do not imagine that I am guilty of the folly of falling in love at firſt ſight; beſides, I am ſtrongly poſſeſſed of the notion that this fair one has told me but half the truth; for I think ſhe would not have marched off with quite ſo much reſolution, had there not been a man ſhe loved, as well as one whom ſhe hated; and yet it is a ſtrange thing, if that be the caſe, that ſhe did not put herſelf at once under his protection:—In ſhort, I know not what to think of it; but I know ſhe ſhall never become food for a fox-hunter.

Upon my ſiſter's return I introduced her, mentioning to her the circumſtances of the lady's diſtreſs: Fanny, you know, is a mild, good-natured girl, whom one can do as we pleaſe with, and who never gives herſelf the trouble of ſaying, why do you do ſo? ſhe received Miſs Benſon very cordially; and I can perceive from the countenance of the fair ſtranger how well ſhe is pleaſed with meeting with a good-natured, humane protector of her own ſex. After dinner, a glaſs or two of wine ſomewhat raiſed her ſpirits, and ſhe became rather more communicative; I wanted to find if ſhe had not taken this ſtep from an affection for ſome happy country 'ſquire unknown to her father,

father, but ſhe kept me at arm's length in that point, not taking any of my hints, and indulging no curioſity of that ſort; but ſhe entered a little more particularly into her own hiſtory, and as ſhe may be in future a conſiderable perſonage in the drama of my letters, I ſhall inſert ſome circumſtances that will give you a better idea of her ſituation.

Her father is a man of a good eſtate in Suſſex, on which he lives the whole year, never thinking of viſiting London; but is, on the contrary, buſied in rural ſports, particularly hunting, ſhooting, and farming, which he likewiſe makes one; he has very little idea of the world, but has much of that ignorant integrity and ſtrange ſort of honeſty, which diſgraces the virtues, though they add to their number; in a word, a man of no refinement. Her mother died when ſhe was very young; ſhe was educated chiefly by an uncle and aunt, people of the world, who ſpent much of their time at London; this uncle at his death left her the five thouſand pounds, but much more than balanced it by her having no other houſe to dwell in but her father's, for her aunt within a year after her huſband's death married again. Upon her return to ſettle in Suſſex ſhe was rather melancholy, and did not bear ſo well with the ruſticity of every thing about her, as when it was only a ſhort ſummer's jaunt, and the town, with all its gaieties, was in view, after a few months. Her principal amuſements were books and her harpſichord, which neither her mother, her father, her brother, or any of the neighbours had much taſte for: they recommended the compleat Houſewife to her, as a much better companion than either Addiſon or Pope; and in the midſt of an air of Piccini have ſaluted her ears with hallowing their dogs.

dogs. One may eaſily conceive that her time muſt hang moſt miſerably heavy upon her, and wanted not the addition of miſery that reſulted from the intruſion of an admirer whom ſhe deteſted. Upon my ſoul, Frederick, I heartily ſympathiſe with the poor girl—What could ſhe do but ſeek for happineſs by flight?

In the afternoon my ſiſter took her in the coach to ſome ſhops, where ſhe bought ſome trifles, and has, after a multitude of apologies, conſented to remain in my houſe until ſhe can frame ſome plan of conduct that will be proper for her to follow.—And here ends my narrative. I begin already to wiſh ſhe had never entered my doors, for it is a ſituation more aukward than can be imagined; I am in imminent danger of falling deſperately in love, and if I was to chooſe, I know not which I ſhould prefer, that ſtate or an halter—to marry I ſhould not. Her five thouſand comes not to my mark by fifteen—love and poverty agree moſt miſerably—other thoughts than marriage honour forbids. I love game, but it muſt be lawful; I will ſteal that in the night which ought to be ſhot in the open day. Thus you ſee there is no ſafety for me but in my remaining an abſolute inſipid acquaintance, having two ſiſters inſtead of one—— I will endeavour it. Yours.

RICHARD MELVILL.

LETTER II.

Mr. FREDERICK to Mr. MELVILL.

MELVIL, there is not a man in the King's dominions that knows himſelf ſo little as thou. Why this adventure was framed by kind chance for thee alone; of all men you will make the

the worſt uſe of it. You have picked up a fair incognita, with fine eyes, an admirable complexion, with ſuch a grace and air!—Oh Lord! and what are ſuch fine play-things made for? Take my word for it, Dick, for love and pleaſure not for pain. This is one of the pretty painted clouds that ſail acroſs your atmoſphere to beautify your days, but thou art ſuch a whining fellow that if poſſible you will turn it to a thunder-ſtorm.—Marriage! Heavens! that men ſhould be the forgers of their own chains!—the builders of their own gibbets!—the artificers of their own racks!—Marriage indeed! and for twenty thouſand pounds! I thought I had cured you of talking that nonſenſe to me: you would determine to marry this pretty creature in an inſtant if ſhe had twenty thouſand pounds—depend upon it therefore that you will marry her without a ſhilling: if you would jump into mount Ætna for an hundred guineas, you would certainly do the ſame for half as many ſhillings—the evil is ſo diſproportionate to the reward, that five or twenty are preciſely the ſame. It is, however, plain enough that I am to conſider you in future as a married inamorato! Making honourable addreſſes!—ha! ha! that truly is very pleaſant!—But honour forbids any other! True honour would forbid your making a valuable woman ſo miſerable as the bleſſed ſtate is ſure of doing. Well—I have done with thee—and now I have given you ſome very ſage advice, prithee attend and let me have the aſſiſtance of yours.

The Earl of H——you know has long profeſſed himſelf my friend, that is my patron; a word, by the way, which I would blot from my dictionary if I had a quarter of your fortune. The other day I was in company with him, and he took me aſide for an opportunity to mention to me

his

his going to the South of France, and that he ſhould be glad I would accompany him. Now I am in doubt whether I ſhould refuſe him poſitively until I have a full explanation of his future intentions; or, which I think would be the wiſer plan, whether I ſhould in the old ſtyle, at once take him at his word, and go. I am not yet determined, and want advice, therefore give it me without delay.

Yours truly,

HENRY FREDERICK.

LETTER III.

Mr. MELVILL to Mr. FREDERICK.

I Received yours, my friend, and am very ſorry to find by the end of your letter that you have not given up all hopes of any recommendations from Lord H—n now he is not in office; and therefore may not have an opportunity of ſerving you, but remember that when he was, the reſult was exactly the ſame. I hate all dependance, but I am not one of thoſe fools, who think that every body ſhould neglect thoſe connections, which may probably prove beneficial. I adviſe you therefore to follow your own opinion: If you think his lordſhip will ever do any thing for you, by all means go, and oblige him in every reaſonable requeſt; if you have but very diſtant hopes, the ſooner you break entirely the connection the better. Now you muſt permit me to recur to my own affair.

I diſagree with you totally in principles—you ridicule all religion, and every tye but thoſe of mere and naked morality; in ſuch a ſyſtem marriage appears in a light too ridiculous to think of—you are ſo far conſiſtent; but when you laugh at the protection due from me to Miſs Benſon, as the

the maſter of that houſe to which ſhe fled for preſervation; I utterly diſagree with you; I hate the idea, and would rather ſuffer death than injure even in imagination that virtue, which calls on me for its ſupport. To be yet more ſerious, this unfortunate lady is ſo full of excellence—is ſuch an image of perfection, that to ſee and know her and not to love her, would argue a mind ſtrangely perverſe to every feeling of humanity, and every elegant impreſſion that beauty can make on a ſuſceptible mind; that I begin to think it will be impoſſible not to love her. But what am I to do, Frederick? She is as ſilent as the grave; when I pay the moſt diſtant compliment to her beauty or her wit, ſhe regards me no more than the chair ſhe ſits on, further than friendſhip; and that, the friendſhip of a day, and in which perhaps gratitude has ſome ſhare: But be it what it may, my die is caſt, and I muſt love her in ſpite of myſelf. I have however the ſatisfaction of ſuppoſing, that her heart is not engaged; but even this is conjecture. This morning I requeſted her to favour me with ſome airs on the Harpſichord, and ſhe obliged me with a readineſs, that added to the pleaſure I received. Her execution is infinite, but her taſte far exceeds it: Her ſinging abſolutely moves one to madneſs; every note drops into the ſoul; ſhe has an expreſſion, a pathos—a tenderneſs which exceeds all imagination. You may frequent the beſt Operas to hear the exertion of fine voices, but if you would experience the breathings of imagination; if you would have the pathetic overpower your ſoul in the moſt amazing touches of the ſofteſt melody, this is the ſyren that muſt enchant you. Taſte is her characteriſtic; ſhe diſplays it equally in her dreſs, her air, her ſpeech, her ſentiments, and in the ex-

preſſion of her voice. Never was muſic ſo aſtoniſhingly exerted to melt the human ſoul. Never was ſuch a commentary on the idea of Salluſt: "Is it poſſible that a woman ſhould be able to "expreſs in ſuch an inimitable manner the moſt "tender feelings, and yet be ſtrictly virtuous?" It cannot be: but then this want of ſtrict virtue is the want of the age—not peculiar to Miſs Benſon; theſe expreſſions are what all women aim at, and moſt deſire to excel in, how few ſoever are able to attain to ſuch uncommon perfection. It is an age in which women bred in the world cannot be truly virtuous through principle: they love vice, but vanity preſerves many from its practice; and thus it will ever be found, that one paſſion is the oppoſer of another. Did you ever know a paſſion conquered by the love of virtue? Can there be a ſtronger proof of the general ſpirit of vice than women exerting themſelves in ſinging with ſuch aſtoniſhing effect as this lady? I might venture to aver that it is impoſſible to hear, without loving her. But where is the principle of exerting arts that tend ſo powerfully to enſnare the human ſoul? Can a woman be miſtreſs to all men? Can ſhe be wife to more than one? Why then attack the whole ſex? I cannot entirely pardon a female that plays like Miſs Benſon, if ſhe plays ſo to every one; for I have no great notion of that ſpecies of modeſty that conceals perfections leſt they ſhould be dazzling; this will not be found in the preſent age at leaſt.

After my lovely warbler had riſen from the harpſichord, I addreſſed her, with eyes that would have betrayed me to half her ſex, tho' I really believe ſhe did not read me.

"Pray, Miſs Benſon, do you aim in your Mu-"ſic moſt at execution or expreſſion?"

"I don't

"I don't clearly comprehend the difference, Sir."

"True, madam; but the expreſſion of exe-
"cution, and the general expreſſion of the muſic
"are two things."

"That muſic which pleaſes moſt people I
"ſhould eſteem the beſt expreſſion and the beſt
"execution."

"Now I underſtand you; and I ſee you have
"a very juſt idea of the art, to give pleaſure in
"the great deſign of it: but pleaſing is ſometimes
"the moſt cruel exertion of the moſt elegant
"mind."

"How can that be, Sir?"

"Very eaſily, madam: After hearing you ſing,
"who ſo much exceed all the ſinging I ever heard
"before, what pain would it be to know that I
"could hear you no more!"

"Lord! Mr. Melvill, you have gone quite
"round-about for a compliment."

"I am glad to hear it, for the ſtrait way would
"be to ſpeak plain truth; whereas a compliment
"implies a falſhood. I make them not to you,
"Miſs Benſon."

"You do then to other people?"

"It is neceſſary; women in general muſt be
"complimented, or the converſation grows dull."

"So in order to enliven it you tell them a pack
"of complimentary lies—and then they are very
"well pleaſed. You have an excellent opinion
"of our ſex."

"If the ſex wants the art of diſcovering when
"a man ſpeaks truth, and when he utters nothing
"but falſhood, they ſurely muſt thank themſelves:
"But this is not the caſe—they will know when a
"man is twiſting a ſtring of compliments; and
"they had rather hear ſuch lying than My good

" Miſs, you are ſo very ugly that I will converſe " no longer with you."

" Sure, Mr. Melvill, you have the ſtrangeſt idea " in the world! ſo there can be no converſation " with a woman without an addreſs to her beauty " or her uglineſs? Why cannot you converſe " with a ſenſible or a ſilly woman in the ſame " manner as with ſuch people of your own ſex?"

" Impoſſible! We always enter into converſation " with women for pleaſure, never for inſtruction " or information: and a woman will never be " pleaſing to others, unleſs ſhe is pleaſed herſelf; " hence ariſes the neceſſity of complimenting the " ladies for whom we feel not the leaſt emo- " tion."

" Which is a habit that grows upon you until " you are incapable of feeling emotions for any, " and conſequently compliment all alike."

" Never can that be the caſe with me; and " the woman that does not know when I ſpeak " truth muſt read me poorly indeed!"

If my eyes did not at that moment betray my moſt inward feelings, they are very unfaithful interpreters: Never did ſhe appear half ſo charming; a riſing bluſh half ſpread her lovely cheeks —a ſweet confuſion in her manner; but in an inſtant ſeating herſelf at the harpſichord, ſhe ſtruck a few broken notes, and my ſiſter entering the room relieved us: Truly, Frederick, I went too far, ſuch moments are as much a declaration of ones paſſion, as if I wrote it in capitals—and it would be ridiculous to the laſt degree in me, to expect any thing but contempt or reproof, for making love to her in ſo peculiar a ſituation as ſhe is in at preſent. I was much to blame; and will conduct myſelf better for the future. Yours,

MELVILL.

LET-

LETTER IV.

Mr. FITZGERALD to Mr. MASON.

IN my laſt I told you the idol of my ſoul for whom I would ſacrifice ten thouſand lives, Miſs Benſon, was juſt on the verge of a forced marriage with that Bruin Slingſby. You muſt be well aſſured that the niceſt rules of conduct in this caſe allowed and even demanded, that I ſhould attempt to ſave ſo amiable a woman from the jaws of ſuch a plot againſt her happineſs, as this match, than which nothing could be more out of all decorum. Mr. Maſon, I have often told you, and you too often laughed at the idea, that a general decorum of manners and propriety of behaviour, are the only guides we ſhould follow in life. Every man, in order to gain that propriety, ſhould lay down a plan of conduct on his entrance into the world, to make it the rule of his actions in the affairs of it; in love, in friendſhip, in buſineſs, in every thing. Why do men appear frequently ridiculous when unexpected accidents happen? Merely becauſe they are not prepared for their defence, they have laid down no plan, the parts of which are ſo nicely adapted to each other, that every ſtep in life is not only the exertion of one effort, but preparatory to another: A man may thus be ſaid to walk ſecurely; he is not perpetually thrown off his guard like thoſe flippant beings who, one would think, were made only to move about and to ſhew their own folly.

I have been led into theſe reflections by a ſtrange accident that has happened to me lately; after I knew that old Benſon had ſo little propriety in him as to think of forcing his daughter to marry Slingsby, I determined upon mature conſideration, to prevent it. Two motives coincided to bring me

to this reſolution, the lady's welfare highly demanded it, for nothing could be ſo prepoſterous as to marry an accompliſhed woman to a fellow of no ideas; and ſecondly, juſtice to my own happineſs. The honourable poſſeſſion of this moſt valuable creature being the great aim of my preſent endeavours, and not having received the treatment from her father in the regular way that I deſerved, it was highly neceſſary, with the lady's allowance, to provide againſt evil accidents by marrying ourſelves without, as it could not be with, the conſent of her father. All this was ſyſtematic, you know ſhe always liſtened to my addreſſes not in that ſilly manner which inferior women practiſe, but according to the moſt genuine rules of propriety. I made her this propoſal in ſuch a manner, that I did not apprehend ſhe would reject it: Her reply was becoming a woman of her excellent underſtanding—"That a matter of ſuch great conſequence was not to be undertaken raſhly—"that it was a plan ſhe had not conſidered—ſhe "would therefore give me an anſwer the Tueſday "following."

When that day came, I was punctual to hear her deciſion: Mr. Maſon, it nearly affected me: No man could be more paſſionately in love with any woman than I with her: I had ſo long contemplated her admirable mind, and been delighted with the view of the moſt angelic perſon that nature ever framed, that I could not but be wonderfully impatient, when I waited for the agreement that was to make me ſupremely happy. She conſented to my bliſs, ſaid ſhe had well conſidered the whole affair, and put ſuch confidence in my honour and the propriety of my conduct, that ſhe would engage in the propoſal I had made her; adding that ſhe had laid the plan herſelf, and apprehended

prehended I ſhould have no objection to her conducting it.

Overjoyed with this condeſcenſion, I was all ſubmiſſion to her ideas—and promiſed to conduct myſelf totally by her direction. She then informed me that ſhe had a relation at Mancheſter, to whom I ſhould conduct her in poſt-chaiſes with the utmoſt expedition; that no time muſt be loſt, as the next day was to be her wedding one—that I ſhould be in a lane where ſhe mentioned at twelve o'clock that night, with a poſt-chaiſe and four horſes, and ſhe would preſently join me. "But, "added ſhe, I have one condition on which the "execution of this depends; and that you muſt "abſolutely agree to."

"That, madam, would be an impropriety in-"deed in me to think of refuſing."

"It hurts my delicacy much to be ſo long as "we muſt be together, to be alone with a gentle-"man and quite in his power; for this reaſon, "though I put the utmoſt confidence in you, I "muſt inſiſt that you never open your lips to me "between this place and Mancheſter, which is "near three hundred miles—you muſt abſolutely "ſay nothing to me, in the chaiſe nor at the inns, "though two nights will be ſpent at them; and I "deſign either to go in a maſk, or elſe ſo muffled "up that nobody can know me, leſt I ſhould be "diſcovered."

"I commend your prudence and foreſight ex-"ceedingly, madam, and you may depend on the "moſt profound obedience.—But as I am ſo long "to be deprived the pleaſure of ſeeing this beau-"teous face, or converſing with the object of "my love—ſuffer me to taſte heaven in one ſa-"lute, as a ſpecimen of my future bliſs."

Mr. Maſon, I am not a ſilly whining lover—

nor

nor an indelicate one—this was an abſolute impulſe that led me to an indecorum; but the fair one allowed me to taſte the pleaſures of heaven before my time. Would Scipio have been continent had Miſs Benſon been his captive?—But one kiſs was not a great matter; and her good nature, which is as great as her beauty, forgave the indiſcretion.

I was punctual to a moment with the chaiſe, with four picked horſes and lads I could depend on; and after waiting about ten minutes at the place appointed, my charmer appeared, ſo bemuffled that her father might have met her at noon-day without knowing her. We were no ſooner ſeated in the chaiſe than I forgot my promiſe, and ſpoke to her; but ſhe brought me, by an unbroken ſilence on her ſide, to a due remembrance of it; and I ſubmitted to my fate. We changed horſes at every ſtage, but from ſeveral untoward accidents did not get the next day further than Northampton; I would have puſhed on two or three ſtages more, but I dreaded fatiguing Miſs Benſon. I made one or two attacks upon her ſpeech in the moſt tender terms, but ſhe anſwered me by holding up a piece of paper, on which ſhe had written, Remember your promiſe. She retired to her apartment as ſoon as ſhe got to the inn; and I ſaw no more of her till next morning. That evening we arrived at Mancheſter, when I was in hopes ſhe would have gone directly to her relations, and made me happy with her ſight and ſpeech—but no—no ſuch matter—ſhe would not ſtir from the inn, but retired again from the parlour, and left me in cruel impatience till next morning.

The breakfaſt things were ſet out, and I was walking backward and forwards in the room, impatient,

patient, but with a thrill of joy through all my veins, when I reflected that this day was to give me poſſeſſion of the object of my adoration, and make me the huſband of the moſt charming of her ſex. The ſun ſhone with uncommon luſtre —a peal of cheering bells were enlivening the town—the day was auſpicious—every thing ſeemed made for joy, and my rapid ideas were all on fire. The door opened, and in came my bride. —"Nay, Miſs Benſon—no more of this muffling "up now—prithee bleſs me with the ſight of "that lovely face from which I have ſo long been "baniſhed." She agreed, and throwing back her hood, who the devil ſhould ſtand before me but a blear-ey'd wench, who I recollected to be Miſs Benſon's waiting maid. I was ſtruck on a heap, but recovering myſelf,

"Where is your miſtreſs, child? In Suſſex?"

"Yes, ſir—my miſtreſs did not come."

"Who then?"

"I, ſir."

"What! muffled up and cloaked from my "knowledge in that manner?"

"Yes, ſir."

"By whoſe orders?"

"My miſtreſs gave me the orders, ſir."

"And did your miſtreſs order you to perſonate "herſelf in that manner?"

"Yes, ſir."

"For what reaſon?"

"I don't know. But ſhe ſaid that ſhe had laid "a particular plan, ſir, of operations, and this "unuſual ſtep was abſolutely neceſſary."

"A particular plan of operations! Ha! did "ſhe ſay that?

"Yes, ſir."

"And that it was abſolutely neceſſary?"

"Yes,

"Yes, and that the cataſpholy would come in "good time, though not now."

"Cataſtrophe you mean, child—did ſhe ob- "ſerve that?",

"Yes, ſir, ſhe did."

"And what are you to do to get home again?"

"Home, ſir? I am come home to my father "and mother, ſir; they live in Mancheſter."

"But how are you to return to your miſtreſs?"

"Not at all, ſir, my miſtreſs diſcharged me, "ſir—ſhe wants me no more till ſhe writes me a "letter."

"Wants you no more!"

"Yes, ſir, that is what ſhe told me."

I write this to you from Stone, whither I am returned from Mancheſter, after this abominable diſappointment. I have no doubt, Maſon, but you will laugh at me for this affair not a little; but I am at the ſame time clear that you will not fully conſider the weight of the declaration, that it was a particular plan of operations that made this neceſſary. You will not comprehend theſe plans of operations can be productive of deciſive ſtrokes of this ſort. It appears to me that Miſs Benſon had diſcovered ſome exigency of affairs which would not permit her to venture with me; and at the ſame time was fearful that my preſence in Suſſex, in caſe ſuch exigence happened, would be productive of evil conſequences. This very naturally explains it, according to the principles of propriety; and depend upon it, my friend, that this principle of acting is never to be ſlighted with impunity. We may laugh at regularity in the conduct of life, but thoſe who experience moſt of it, will find that ſettled principles will ever conduct a man nearer to the aims he wiſhes, than the deſultory wild manner in which the generality of mankind

mankind carry on their affairs. Adieu, my friend, I ſhall be glad to hear your opinion of theſe matters.

THOMAS FITZGERALD.

LETTER V.

Mr. MASON, to Mr. FITZGERALD.

NOT all the wit that ever flowed from the beſt comic poets collected in one piece, could make me laugh half ſo much as your letter did. Doſt thou not remember that when I ſaw Miſs Benſon at Mr. Cremer's, I told you it was abſolute impertinence in ſuch a multiplication table of method as thou art, to pretend to, or think of her? She is all that your warm fancy would paint her, and by juſt ſo much too good for you. How could you conceive that the moral fitneſs of things, the propriety of conduct, and the neceſſity of ſyſtematic plans of life could make an impreſſion on the heart of a young creature, beauteous as the morn, and formed of nothing but wit, fire, and fancy? Your perſon, and even your fortune would have given ſanction to the idea, but that damn'd jargon of propriety—that quakeriſm of ideas would have deſtroyed the pretenſions of a man more formidable to the ſex than ever you could be.

You ſee plainly from this I am clearly of opinion that you are bamboozled, and made the compleateſt fool that ever I remember to have heard of. Her maid's father lived at Mancheſter. In good truth, it was a modeſt way of paſſing the wench home to her pariſh!

Reflect for a moment on the life Miſs Benſon led—ſhut up in a caſtle where no pleaſure was found but the chaſe and the bottle, and where converſation

converſation never aroſe beyond a dog or a horſe —uſed to London and good company—elegantly accompliſhed—full of wit, and conſequently ready for miſchief.——Sure you muſt ſuppoſe that a gentleman paying his addreſſes to her, of whatever kind, muſt vary the ſcene: if ſprightly and agreeable, he would enliven the time; if dull and droniſh and (you'll forvive me) much in the ſyſtematic ſtyle, he would ſerve for her to laugh at. She encouraged you, and coquetted with you merely to paſs away her time; and I dare ſwear has laughed as heartily as myſelf at the idea of your very gallant journey with her maid. My good friend, when will you be convinced that love muſt never be made by rule and order—that propriety of conduct is death to it—and that the ſpirit of ſyſtematizing can only diſguſt, never conquer a miſtreſs? Your ideas are thoſe of another world, or at leaſt of another country; they would be hardly pardonable in an old batchelor of ſeventy, much leſs in a young one of five and thirty. In ſober ſadneſs you muſt forget the lady, for believe me ſhe will never remember you without laughing.

Your return to Suſſex will have cooled, I hope, the rage of propriety, and you will then ſee things as they really are: give me another letter, that I may have the ſatisfaction of hearing you are in your right ſenſes, and tell me what the father, brother, and young Slingſby, of hunting memory, ſays to this.

Adieu,

W. Mason.

LETTER VI.

Miſs BENSON, to Miſs EMILIA WATSON.

YOU miſtake much, my dear Emilia, in thinking that I ſhall draw myſelf into ſcrapes as you call them. The man that catches me in a ſcrape muſt be a much ſtranger animal than any I have ſeen yet. And why ſhould you wonder at my leaving my father's, when ſuch pains were taken to make the houſe odious to me? I have an independant income that will ſupport me faſhionably if I prove an œconomiſt; and ſure there is more happineſs in being free to follow one's amuſements than be ſhut up with a tyrannic father, a brutal brother, and a more odious lover. I made, however, no heſitation in the matter, but I did not manage the whole ſo well as I ought, which was partly owing to your brother's not being in time at the hotel, which brought on the meeting with Mr. Melvil.

You again teaſe me to give you more particulars of my treatment in Suſſex, and are pleaſed to ſay that I have not yet ſufficiently apologized and explained my conduct to you; you ſhall not have any reaſon for that complaint in future, for I will now give you a few anecdotes that I apprehend will juſtify me ſufficiently, at leaſt in your friendly eye; as to the rigid part of the world I deſpiſe it.

At nine years of age my uncle Mr. Melliſh, took me to live with him and his wife, as they had no children of their own; my father readily aſſented to it, for the education of a young girl with him would have been to make that of a groom or a cook, any thing higher would have given him too much trouble. Never were any people

more tender and indulgent to me than Mr. and Mrs. Melliſh, but their indulgence did not flow from the weakneſs, but the perfection of humanity. Their treatment of me was full of propriety, full of manly ſenſe, and conducted in every reſpect with an equal eye to my pleaſure and inſtruction, and ſo managed, which is extremely rare, that both were anſwered, and yet neither injured. They determined that I ſhould be miſtreſs of every accompliſhment in the power of the beſt maſters to beſtow; at the ſame time that they carried me conſtantly into a round of very genteel company, to prevent, as my uncle uſed to expreſs it, the pedantry of accompliſhments, which in ſome women is as offenſive as the worſt that ever iſſued from the walls of a college. He ſpent a winter with his whole family at Paris, chiefly to perfect me in the French language, and to amuſe me with ſome of the gaieties of the court of France. Two years afterwards he made a ſimilar tour to Italy, that I might learn at Florence the Italian language, of which he was very fond, and thought it equally requiſite with the French.

Upon this plan I was inſtructed, with equal care and attention, in the French, Italian, Latin, muſic, dancing, and drawing; in all which I had, through my uncle's kindneſs, whatever aſſiſtance could be gained in England, France, and Italy. and at the ſame time, to prevent the ill conſequences which ſometimes ariſe from inſtructing women too much, he took care to attend to the common manners of life, and eſpecially to ſteer clear of that rock conceit, which he well knew ſo many of the ſex had ſplit on: but I will venture to aſſert that it was impoſſible for him to attend the education of a woman, and have her turn out affected.

Mr. Melliſh,

Mr. Melliſh, in making me a miſtreſs of the languages I mentioned, had views to my reading at leaſt as much as ſpeaking them. It was no ſlight amuſement to me to read over the Latin and Italian poets to him, with ſome other writers in thoſe and the French language. He uſed often to tell me, that women ſhould read the beſt authors in order to form their minds and cultivate their natural taſte, which was the only way to keep clear of that affectation which foiled ſo many excellent characters. "You ſhould know (ſaid he) what the world has been, as well as what it is; and mark the progreſs of ideas, of manners, and the ſtations and conduct of the female ſex in other countries and other ages; you will there find, my dear Julia, that mankind have always been nearly the ſame. When you mark diſtinctions, you will at the ſame time obſerve the reaſons; you will every where ſee the triumph of virtue, and the true uſe of poliſhing and adorning the human mind; effects, when regular through various nations, and traced in authors, who wrote in different languages, and lived in diſtant ages, will convince you ſo clearly of the real accompanyments of refined ideas and elegant manners, that improvement muſt be the conſequence. Affectation and conceit, which uſually flow from ignorance, and as often from imperfect accompliſhments, can never tarniſh a mind thus ſtored with that knowledge which is for ever applicable to the events of human life."

I was twenty years of age when at Florence; there I became acquainted with Lord William W——, a man formed to captivate a ſenſible heart, but without one quality to preſerve it—amiable, though an aggregate of vice; but his hypocriſy could take the ſemblance of every vir-

tue in order to proſtitute it at the ſhrine of vice. Mr. Melliſh was as much deceived in him as myſelf. A man of quality—heir to an immenſe fortune—and one day to fill the higheſt rank in his country—apparently virtuous—with great parts—ready wit—and a perſon formed to pleaſure—It is not ſurpriſing that ſuch a man, aiming by every aſſiduity to render himſelf agreeable to me, openly profeſſing to Mr. Melliſh, and in every company, that his deſigns were honourable and that he ſhould never be happy till he called me his: under all theſe circumſtances the moſt cautious of my ſex have been entrapped as well as I. As to diſhonourable deſigns, as commonly underſtood, he could not think of them—he did not think of them—my character and my connections kept him in awe.——Three months did he employ in making himſelf maſter of a virgin heart, which had not felt any paſſion. I confeſs, freely confeſs, that I loved him with ardour, but finding that nothing but marriage could further enſue, he proved the moſt deteſtable of all characters—a male coquet, that had made a mere play-thing of me to amuſe himſelf during his reſidence at Florence. My uncle, full of honour and integrity, the moment he ſaw him addreſſing me, wrote to the Duke his father to lay every circumſtance before him: he received an anſwer, with many acknowledgments for ſuch an honourable conduct, and informed him that Lord William was at liberty entirely to pleaſe himſelf, as he truſted fully to his diſcretion. After the receipt of this letter my uncle gave no interruption to his viſits; but when the baſeneſs of his conduct was fully proved, he ſent him a challenge, conceived in terms that would have ſtung a heart not already hardened. His lordſhip, however, knew

better

better how to wage war with women, than to fight his own ſex: he left Florence without returning any anſwer. Mr. Melliſh purſued him to Verona, Padua, Milan, and Turin, with deſign to force him to a combat, if poſſible, or elſe to diſgrace him in the ſevereſt manner, by caning him in public. But the wretch's conduct proved him to be a thorough coward. He fled to Italy, leaving behind him a character truly contemptible; and Mr. Melliſh finding it in vain to purſue him further, returned; proteſting that on his arrival in England, he would publicly make him appear as deſpicable as he had ever been in Italy.

In truth, my dear Emilia, I found peace had fled from my breaſt for ever; I had no lukewarm, hackneyed, or divided affection to give. I loved ſincerely, and left no reſource in my heart to bear up againſt ſuch a cruel ſtroke. Reaſon was unable to combat the folly of ſtill loving a man who deſerved my hate. In vain did my uncle urge me, in converſations full of the moſt genuine philoſophy, to forget a wretch ſo undeſerving my attention. I could not ceaſe to love; but, for my uncle's peace, I did every thing my mind could ſuggeſt to conceal the wound freſh bleeding in my heart—I partly ſucceeded. I applied to my ſtudies with freſh vigour. Mr. Melliſh formed a little Society, at a vaſt expence, to teach me Greek by converſation; this was at Venice, and he ſucceeded. He thought that the acquiſition of knowledge would baniſh from my mind the remembrance of Lord William W——. Muſic ſoothed me—I practiſed it much among the greateſt maſters. Travelling was uſed, with the greateſt expence, and in the greateſt variety to amuſe me: we paſſed from Venice into Germany; we reſided ſome time at the courts of Vienna, Mu-

nich, and Dreſden; we partook of every diverſion. The handſome manner, ſplendid I may ſay, in which we travel'ed, introduced us to the beſt company. Mr. Melliſh was proud of diſplaying my knowledge and accompliſhments in a country where the women are ill educated—I paſſed for a prodigy. I had ſeveral offers of marriage, my uncle was entirely ſilent, but I refuſed them all; I ſtill felt that my heart could not accompany my hand.

Never was delicacy greater than my uncle's in theſe affairs; he wiſhed to ſee me advantageouſly ſettled in life, and particularly as I had met with ſuch an unhappy diſappointment at my firſt entrance into it; but nothing could induce him to attempt in the ſlighteſt manner, to perſuade me in favour of any one.

After a journey of near a year through all the courts of Germany, through Denmark and Holland, we finiſhed with that of Bruſſels; and returning from thence to London, fixed there for the winter. It was paſſed in a manner particularly planned by Mr. Melliſh to make me utterly forget Lord William W—— who, I ſhould tell you, was at this time at Paris. The amiable man ſaw in me a melancholy at times, which made him fear my cure was not fully compleated—his endeavours were partly ſucceſsful; the chearful regularity of life returned, and the converſation which our travels created was always agreeable and inſtructive.

In the ſpring——oh! my Emilia, what a cutting loſs! Mr. Melliſh died; I might truly ſay he left me fatherleſs, for never man acted the part of a father with truer friendſhip or a more unbiaſſed judgment. You well remember how perfectly miſerable this infinite loſs made me. Five

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and twenty thouſand pounds, which he left me as a legacy made no amends for ſo irreparable a loſs. ——Every day brought me more and more acquainted with the miſerable ſituation I was in, which appeared worſe when I reflected on the halcyon days I had ſeen. Within three months after I went down into Suſſex, quite a ſtranger in my father's houſe. What a change was it for me who had been uſed to every elegance of life, and to the beſt company Europe could afford, to meet there with nothing but ruſticity and vulgarneſs! My father without any ideas, but thoſe of dogs and horſes; my brother bred in his ſchool with a circle of country gentlemen, moſt of them fox-hunters, and all of them ignorant and unpoliſhed —their wives and daughters framed for no higher entertainment than a country aſſembly, or that hoſpitable monſter, a viſiting dinner.—Theſe were to be my companions. Nor was this all; I had not even the affection of my father; he ridiculed, or rather attempted to ridicule, the ſyſtem on which my uncle had educated me; declared openly againſt every accompliſhment that ſhould tend to give women ideas ſuperior to the domeſtic offices; this was cutting to me, and ſome replies I gave him, which having more of wit than duty, made him treat me as a being quite a ſtranger to his family: My brother declared open war againſt me: My learning hurt him greatly; he had not been three years from the univerſity, yet bore (not ſeldom) the ſhame of being corrected by his ſiſter.

Matters were in t is train when two inamorato's ſtarted up; one a country ſquire, a fox-hunter, as capital a calf as you can well conceive; Slingſby the other, a man of ſmall fortune: a well meaning fool, who thought to gain importance by

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an affected originality of character. You cannot well imagine the contempt I felt within myself, for these miserable beings, who openly professed to pay their addresses to me, who had refused offers that should have made them blush to follow; but my contempt was mixed with a resentment which I bore the sex in general, ever since the infamous treatment I had received from a man on whom I had once fixed my affection.

My dear Emilia, this is a part of my character in which I feel a change, that Mr. Mellish, were he living, would have much endeavoured to prevent! deceived so falsly and basely by a man in whom I thought all the virtues united. The sex have suffered much in my esteem for his deceit; for when I am addressed in the language of love, I reflect on my old deceiver: Why should I ever give credit to any? An honest man may certainly be found: But what a desperate game shall I play, who have been once so miserably fool'd, to trust the lying sex again! I shall be no more able to penetrate the meaning of a dissembling villain now than formerly. Refined art so absolutely conceals art, that it takes the semblance of nature. Is it not therefore the advice of sound sense to suspect them all?

My aversion to the sex increases every day. I feel a kind of malignant pleasure in the idea of avenging on them the misery I have felt. This is by no means an emo ion that a liberal mind—that generosity allows—It is an idea that Mr. Mellish would have strongly combated: I feel arguments he would have used—I feel t. eir force; but this black affair has given such a wound to the peace of my soul, that it has thrown my mind from its right bias; nor can I ever see a young fellow come flirting up to me, but I eye him

him much in the ſame manner as I do a reptile that I have an inclination to cruſh unfeelingly beneath my feet.

Since I met the ſlight at Florence, I have viewed the whole ſex with no favourable eye, which has made me very clear-ſighted to the defects and follies of every man of my acquaintance; my contempt of them is raiſed from the emptineſs of their pretenſions. I find among them few that poſſeſs any real knowledge—ſo few that are not foppiſh, conceited, or brutal, that I muſt be wanting to common ſenſe to have a grain of reſpect for beings that are incomparably beneath the attention of women of common underſtanding. Vice debaſes the ſoul, and reduces thoſe who have received gifts from nature, and accompliſhments from education, to a par with the meaneſt creatures. Why do I not find men who claim a diſtinguiſhed attention for their learning, their knowledge of mankind, or their wit? I meet with none. If you ſeek for learning it is to be found in a college, where the poſſeſſors of it know nothing of life and manners. If you would look for knowledge of mankind, you muſt go to the aſſembly of knaves and ſharpers. If you turn your eye to the polite accompliſhments, what do you ſee but coxcombs and faſhionable puppies? Theſe are the beings who call themſelves the Lords of the creation, and who regard women as made only for their amuſement. While I have a capacity to diſcover the emptineſs of their pretenſions, can I fail of deſpiſing them? While I ſee the general worthleſſneſs of their principles, can I avoid adding hatred to contempt?

Yes, my Emilia, I hate and deſpiſe the ſex, and I am never ſo well pleaſed, as when I can revenge the injured cauſe of women, by expoſing their

their ignorance—ridiculing their foppery, and rendering their vices the engines of their puniſhment. If ever I allow the momentary addreſſes of any, it will be to rival them in their own arts, to laugh at them in their exultation, and to ſpurn them in their fall. My heart is ſecure againſt all their plots, and I expect to profit by the experience I have bought. But to return.

The hiſtory of my two Suſſex lovers is a piece of comedy. Slingſby is a mere brute, that had an eye to nothing but my fortune, and to cementing his friendſhip more ſtrongly with my father and brother. His application was firſt to them. My father liked the thought extremely; and my brother was overjoyed at an opportunity of making a grand breach amongſt us all, for he conjectured that I ſhould give a poſitive refuſal. Slingſby, having delivered his credentials, became in form my lover—with a liſt of acres of ſound clay in his hand, he came to make love. While I was immured in Suſſex I wanted amuſement; and this fellow became a ſubject to laugh at. I received him in high good humour, until I had drawn out as plentiful a crop of folly as I could expect, and then ridiculed him ſo ſeverely, that he had ſenſe enough to look extremely ſilly, and took his diſcharge, by leaving the room with as much precipitation, as if he was afraid of being thrown out of the window.

This preſently brought my father to me; I always treated him with reſpect; but as to my brother, the keen contempt with which I treated him, ſilenced his tongue; but he employed himſelf in inſtigating my father to compel me to receive the wretch in marriage. Then it was that Mr. Fitzgerald made his addreſſes, but unknown to my family: this man was a coxcomb of a peculiar ſort,

ſort, with whom I had no little ſport. I gave him all the encouragement he could wiſh, for the better opportunity of examining his nonſenſical character; but when I found him upon the whole a very harmleſs ſilly being, I determined not to keep him in ſuſpence any longer.

My father told me plainly that he was fixed in his determination that I ſhould marry Mr. Slingſby. I gave him the hearing, but ſoon determined to diſobey. He then proceeded to name the day on which the wedding ſhould be performed, ſwearing that he would force me to it—that if I had five and twenty millions inſtead of as many thouſand pounds, I ſhould find that he was maſter here; and intimated a deſign of locking me up. As I was in the hands of a pack of brutes, I did not like the ſituation, and directly determined to quit the houſe.

Fitzgerald came fortunately in a critical time: his viſits would have been ſuſpected had he not uſed the precaution of always accompanying a friend of his and my father's in dinner parties; he very gravely informed me that I was ſoon to be married, and propoſed my eſcaping, by running away and marrying him. This piece of impertinence deſerved puniſhment; I determined to give him a compleat diſappointment. I diſcharged my maid, as I did not chuſe to take with me to town any witneſſes of the ridiculous treatment I met with in Suſſex. Her friends live at Manchester; ſhe was at a loſs how to get home. I fixed a late hour at night for Fitzgerald to be ready with a chaiſe. I inſiſted upon his travelling to Manchester with me in a maſk, without offering to exchange a ſyllable with me till he got there. I then gave Betty her inſtructions, with a ſtrict charge to be cautious in the performance. He

was

was punctual to the time, and my Abigail went off to make him happy in a match with me. This piece of miſchief he well deſerved. I had provided a chaiſe for myſelf, at a neighbouring farm, whether I had conveyed a trunk, with a few cloaths, my jewels, and ſome other things; and then bidding adieu to Suſſex, took the road to London.

My plan was to go to Mr. Cazan's, at Charing Croſs, who knew me, and with whom I had laid out conſiderable ſums of money, that his wife might provide me lodgings till a houſe and furniture could be got; for till I could appear in a proper manner among my friends I did not chuſe to appear at all; and leſt any accident ſhould defeat this intention, I had written to Mrs. Patrick, who you know is an obſequious relation, to meet me at Cazan's, and in caſe I did not come there, to wait for me at the hotel in Pall Mall, with a coach ready to carry me away immediately. As miſchief would have it, Cazan was moved: but I left my trunk in the care of the miſtreſs of the houſe, and went to Pall Mall to meet Mr. Patrick; ſhe was not there——the waiter was called away the moment he had given me the anſwer, and ſhut the inner door in my face. Provoked, vexed, diſappointed, and fatigued, I burſt into tears; which, however, I ſuppreſſed, leſt I ſhould be obſerved. At that inſtant up came two gentlemen who had ſeen me; the ſpokeſman, with much politeneſs, offered his ſervice in terms which I did not refuſe. I deſired he would convey me ſomewhere from this houſe—I had an hundred fears——Mrs. Patrick I thought might have betrayed me, and I might be purſued: my fatigue made me careleſs, and I catched at the firſt twig that offered. The gentlemen called a chair,

chair, and conducted it to his own house in Germain Street, where I was in strange confusion, and I believe fell into tears again, but I almost forget. He was a modest civil man, and I thought might assist me in my present affairs. Nothing could end better; his sister keeps his house, a mighty harmless good-natur'd girl; and their civility made me accept their offer of using it instead of a lodging. I told them much of my tale, only sinking twenty thousand pounds of my fortune, for several reasons: it was necessary, however, to let them know that they had no reason to fear my being a burthen upon their hospitality.

Here I am at present, my Emilia; I have been out twice to see houses, but can meet with none that I like. My plan is to hire one in Pall-Mall, if I can; if not, somewhere about Grosvenor Square. I shall furnish it handsomely, fix a small establishment of servants, and live as genteely as my fortune will allow. I have written to Mrs. Henry, informing her of my intention, and inviting her to spend some time with me. You know her income is very small, so that I purpose her living with me in a stile of relationship, to save appearances with the world, as a woman of my age cannot with any propriety live alone; she will, at the same time, very readily take care of the house-keeping, and ease me from the mintiæ of domestic business. My income will allow me a chariot, notwithstanding my being more expensive in books, painting, and some other amusement, than perhaps I ought to be. By the way, I am extremely lucky that my connections are all now in George-street; had I been a fortnight later, they would have been gone for Sussex. When settled in the manner I propose, I shall be able to live comfortably and independant, and shall

follow my uſual amuſements as nearly as I poſſibly can, upon the ſame plan as I ſhould have done, if heaven had not deprived me of the beſt—the only friend I had in the world. Good God! what a loſs to me was that of Mr. Melliſh! Never ſhall I ceaſe regretting him while I live, or of honouring his memory as that of a being ſuperior to the world he lived in. If upon the plan I have here ſketched I ſhall be able to paſs my time in an eaſy manner; to make ſtudy, or rather Mr. Melliſh's ſyſtem, my buſineſs, and the common amuſements of the town, a recreation from my attention to better objects, I may perhaps be able to live agreeably; happily I fear I never can. So long and painfully as I have ſtrove to baniſh an unworthy idea from my breaſt, ſtill I find the taſk is but working againſt nature: I dwell with pleaſure on the moſt painful idea that ever entered my mind. This muſt appear very ſtrange to you, but it is no leſs true; have I any reaſon to think that the paſſion that lurks in my breaſt will ſoon be extirpated?

Adieu, my dear Emilia, I remain faithfully yours.

JULIA BENSON.

LETTER VII.

Mr. MELVILL to Mr. FREDERICK.

I AM gone!—gone, my dear Harry, paſt recovery. This angelic fair one has robbed me of every idea but her own. I live but in her preſence. I think of nought but her. I dream of her both waking and ſleeping. My paſſion is wrought up to that cruel pitch, that I muſt declare it or my heart will burſt. Declare it do I ſay?

ſay? To whom? To Miſs Benſon? It would be madneſs! I have no hope—no idea of relief—nothing in view but deſpair.

Poſſeſt of the utmoſt politeneſs, and a boundleſs humanity, this amiable woman treats me with a complaiſance and an eaſe that is death to my love. I adore her to that pitch of affection, that nothing leſs than a return of paſſion can ſatisfy a heart ſo big with love.

Miſs Benſon is, by many, many degrees, the moſt accompliſhed, as well as the moſt beautiful of her ſex. For this week paſt, we have had ſeveral parties whoſe converſation gave her an occaſion, which forced her to impart ſome ſlight opinions on ſeveral literary ſubjects. Menill, who you know is a man of uncommon claſſical learning, aſſures me that ſhe is as good a claſſical ſcholar as ever he met with; and he ſuſpects that ſhe underſtands both Latin and Greek. In French, Italian, and German, ſhe is as fluent as in Engliſh. Her acquaintance with the beſt and politeſt authors in all languages, is unbounded. This will appear rhodomontade to you; but believe me it is fact, and Menill will give you the ſame account. I before-mentioned to you her muſic and ſinging, which exceeds the utmoſt heights to which imagination can attain. Every motion of her body ſhews without a regular figure, that her dancing muſt be grace and elegance itſelf: Where could ſhe get all theſe accompliſhments? The daughter of a private gentleman in Suſſex, to eclipſe the moſt dazzling fair ones that ſhine at St. James's! to eclipſe them in all the elegant accompliſhments as much as ſhe ſurpaſſes them in beauty! and at the ſame time to be a prodigy of learning without a grain of affectation: all this is paſſing ſtrange! Let me further add, that when

ſhe is dreſſed, there is an air of majeſtic grandeur: a noble ſimplicity of ideas:—a ſomething that cannot be expreſſed, but which ſpeaks a princeſs in dignity: while the expreſſion of her countenance is that of all imaginable ſoftneſs: nothing but the mild graces wantoning in every feature. Certainly ſhe is the moſt extraordinary woman I ever met with; Tell me honeſtly if you do not think ſuch an one worthy of my love!

* * * * *

Thurſday Morning.

Every day brings to light new and odd circumſtances concerning Miſs Benſon; ſhe has been often out, upon the ſearch after a houſe, and has at laſt fix'd upon one in Pall-Mall; for which, as ſoon as it is put into good repair, ſhe is to pay one hundred and eighty pounds a year. Is not this a ſtrange thing for a lady in her ſituation, that has only five thouſand pounds? her income cannot be more than two hundred and fifty pounds a year; how therefore can ſhe afford ſo much in houſe-rent? it is an enigma which I cannot decypher. The houſe is to be ready for her in two months; ſhe has been out twice or thrice among cabinet-makers and upholſterers, and has beſpoke great quantities of furniture, and ſcarcely any but what is elegant and expenſive. I cannot comprehend theſe things at all. I am happy as an angel in theſe opportunities of being uſeful to her; for ſhe employs and conſults me in all her buſineſs, but in a manner that makes her ſervice perfect freedom. She is often making apologies for the trouble ſhe gives us, and was infinitely ſolicitous to have her houſe ready as ſoon as poſſible, that ſhe might not be a burthen to our politeneſs, as ſhe

termed

termed it, the ſhorter time. When ſhe found how long a time would be neceſſary, ſhe expreſſed much uneaſineſs; and ſoon after ſaid, that ſhe muſt take a journey into Huntingdonſhire, to viſit a young lady there for whom ſhe had a particular friendſhip; for ſhe could not think of troubling us in ſuch a manner. This ſpeech was death to me: I ſaid every thing my fancy could ſuggeſt, to perſuade her to uſe my houſe as her own, and not think of a journey into the country at a time that ſhe ſhould be in town to attend to her houſe and furniture. What ſhe will do I know not, but I ſhall curſe the day ſhe leaves us, be it when it may.—

Adieu.

RICHARD MELVILL.

LETTER VIII.

Mr. FREDERICK to Mr. MELVILL.

I Have no time to give you my opinion of Miſs Benſon at large; but depend on it you are deceived; ſhe is the caſt miſtreſs or the preſent one of ſome man of fortune, who is abſent. You will fall miſerably in love perhaps with a woman, whoſe character will make you bluſh to think of. Do not be deluded by her excellencies—Granting that your love does not make you blind, what atonement will her ſinging, her dancing, her Italian, her claſſics, and ſo on be to your injured ſtate and fortune, if you either marry an impoſtor, or the caſt off of another! At all events make yourſelf a better maſter of her hiſtory than you are at preſent, and check the violence of your paſſion till you know, at leaſt, that it will not

hurry you to your ruin. A boy juſt eſcaped from ſchool, or wild from the univerſity, might expect pardon from great indiſcretions in love; but remember, you are not of an age to plead ſuch inexperience—do not ſlight this advice, leſt you ſhould miſerably repent it.

Yours, &c.

HENRY FREDERICK.

LETTER XIX.

Mr. FITZGERALD to Mr. MASON.

I Received your letter, in which I find that my Mancheſter journey made you merry, and what is very ſtrange, wholly at my expence. But you are one of the common beings of the world that follow each other in a beaten track, and have no idea of a ſyſtematic conduct. Time may perhaps prove to you, how much you are miſtaken in your views of life.

I muſt confeſs I was mortally diſappointed when I found I had taken a trip of between two and three hundred miles at no ſmall expence, in order to entertain the Abigail inſtead of the miſtreſs; but the confidence I had in the uncommon ſhare of underſtanding poſſeſſed by the lovely Miſs Benſon, made it clear to me, that this plan of her's aroſe from a more attentive obſervation of certain circumſtances, of which I was ignorant; and that it was the means of perhaps enſuring our marriage with more eaſe and more ſpeed than could otherwiſe be poſſible. Filled with this happy idea, I returned to Suſſex quite in ſuch haſte as I had left it. I found my friends much ſurpriſed at my appearance, and in full con-

cluſion

cluſion that Miſs Benſon had gone off with me, for ſhe diſappeared, it ſeems, at the ſame time. It was in vain I aſſured them that I had not ſet eyes on that lady. But the intelligence of her being gone off, convinced me that my ideas were true; ſome accident certainly happened, which made her prefer going alone as the ſafeſt way; and I think there is no doubt but I ſhall receive a letter ſhortly, to inform me where ſhe is, and that ſhe is ready to perform the promiſe on which my happineſs depends.

Thoſe brutes, her relations, I find, are extremely happy ſhe is gone. The father and brother publicly aſperſe her in the groſſeſt manner, and ſeem overjoyed in her abſence: but the lover, Mr. Slingſby, is not quite ſo eaſy; he is doubtleſs much hurt at the loſs of her fortune: As ſoon as he knew that I was returned, he came and demanded, in very unſeemly terms, what I had done with the woman that was to have been his wife? but I gave him an anſwer, the ſhortneſs of which preſently ſtopped his mouth, and I have heard no more of him.

As I expect a letter every day from Miſs Benſon, I ſhall go on with this, till I can give you ſome further information.

* * * * *

London.

My friend Maſon, I am half convinced that you were right in your conjectures, and much fear that I have been vilely duped. But you ſhall have a detail of thoſe circumſtances which have unravelled this myſtery.

Waiting many days, and receiving no tidings of

of Miſs Benſon, I grew impatient, and determined to try if I could not diſcover where ſhe was fled to. I went to every poſt town around us, and I queſtioned every poſt-boy; by a little drink money I found ſhe had taken the road to London. I then traced her every ſtage, and found that the laſt boys had ſet her down at Charing-Croſs at a jeweller's. This made me doubly active in my purſuit. I examined all the houſes around Charing-Croſs, and found a jeweller's. The man's wife only was at home. I enquired concerning the lady, deſcribing her particularly, and the time when ſhe was probably there, adding that I came on buſineſs of much conſequence to her. After ſome recollection, ſhe told me that ſuch a lady had called at the ſhop, under the ſuppoſition of another perſon living at it, who was moved, that, diſappointed at not meeting with thoſe ſhe wanted, ſhe left a trunk in charge with her, for a few days, but it was afterwards ſent away. I enquired where it was ſent: ſhe ſaid to Germain-ſtreet, but knew not the houſe; though the porter might probably remember. I begged that the porter might be called; he ſaid he remembered very well, and accordingly went to ſhew it me.

Knocking at the door, I enquired if Miſs Benſon was there; and to my great joy was anſwered in the affirmative. I deſired to ſee her, and was ſhewn up into a dining-room, where ſhe was ſitting alone. Nothing could be more fortunate. She ſtared at me with ſome ſurprize—" So! ſir, how came you here?"

"On the wings of love. My angelic fair one, why have I not heard from you?"

"Heard from me! But pray ſir, let me have none of your nonſenſe."

"Good heavens, madam, do you forget?"

"No

"No more, ſir. I muſt hear no more of this."

I dropt on one knee at her feet, and with all the pathetic words I was maſter of:

"Let me conjure you, Miſs Benſon, to—"

At the inſtant the door opened, and in came a well dreſſed gentleman; ſurprized at this, he looked with aſtoniſhment, and I riſing———

"Miſs Benſon, you doubtleſs will not let the preſence of any perſon prevent your aſſuring me that you ſpeedily intend to execute your promiſe!"

"What promiſe? I never gave you any."

"Mercy on me! madam: Perhaps you did not promiſe to marry me!—and at Mancheſter! and ſent me thither for that purpoſe!"

"Marry you! (ſaid the gentleman with a countenance I eaſily read)"

"I thought your Mancheſter journey might have been ſufficient to have cooled your love, ſir?" (with a moſt ſatirical ſneer)

"And did you really mean to make a joke of me—to laugh at and deſpiſe me in that manner?"

"Moſt certainly: what aſſurance to expect any thing elſe!"

"I am petrified!"

"Could you be ſo ſuperlative a coxcomb as to imagine that I could do any thing but laugh at your plans, your ſyſtems, and your views of life?"

"But here I ſuppoſe is the ſpark for whom you have ſo baſely betrayed me—and I doubt not but you'll play him as good a trick as you have done me. He is your paramour."

"Sir, this language is what I am little diſpoſed to bear.—Though no paramour, I take an intereſt in every thing that concerns that lady—and will not ſee her inſulted in ſo illiberal a manner."

"Take an intereſt!—Truly; yes I have no doubt but you take an intereſt in her: but, ſir,

the

the inſults are all her own----never was man ſo vilely jilted!"

"Jilted!—This proof alone protects you—out of my houſe this moment!"

"I am gone, ſir—but you ſhall hear ſomething more from me."

With theſe words, into which I threw as much expreſſion as I was maſter of, I left the houſe, and am fully determined to call this lover of her's to account.

In the mean time, Maſon, what a pretty trick it is that this abominable jilt has played me! Her art and her aſſurance have no bounds. I could not have conceived it poſſible that a woman—a young woman too—could have laid and executed ſuch a diabolical plot; but I really believe I ſhall diſcard all thoughts of marriage and the ſex, and enter upon an entire new ſyſtem of life. Her wit is methinks poorly applied in attempting to ridicule my ideas of propriety of conduct. Such notions, I grant, do not inſure one an abſolute ſecurity againſt the ills of life, but they keep off many, and they teach us to bear the reſt. I feel at this moment the ſuperiority which reſults from this conduct; many flippant perſons would be overwhelmed in grief at this diſappointment in their love, but I ſhall ſoon get the better of the erroneous failing, by adopting a new ſyſtem. Experience teaches one when to change; and nothing but folly could keep one either in an old plan of life, after it has proved unſucceſsful; or from purſuing a new one, becauſe the old turned out contrary to expectation. I ſhall not eaſily be laughed out of this idea, while I feel it beneficial in correcting the evil of ſuch a miſchievous affair, as I have lately experienced.

I cannot yet fully underſtand the character of this

this woman; that ſhe is a coquet, cannot be doubted, or ſhe would not have entrapped me in ſuch a manner: but I have no idea of her being abſolutely loſt to ſhame: and yet, what can be her connections with this new admirer Melvill? that is his name. It is plain, ſhe changes her lovers as eaſily and with as little concern as ſhe does her gloves—But I wrong her, it is plain, in calling myſelf a lover—ſince ſhe never made me more than the object of her ridicule. Adieu.

Yours, &c.

THOMAS FITZGERALD.

LETTER X.

Mr. MELVILL to Mr. FREDERICK.

AFFAIRS that have happened lately, demand a detail, and you ſhall have it.

A few days ago, on my return home from a walk to Pall-Mall, I entered the dining-room: Miſs Benſon was ſeated with a ſtrange looking man, of about five and thirty, on his knees at her feet, in a ſupplicating attitude. On my entrance he ſtarted up, and ſeemed to reproach the lady in ſtrong terms, on former rencounters, which I did not underſtand. He fell into a paſſion—called her jilt—and abuſed me as her new paramour; Miſs Benſon retorted all his attacks with amazing ſpirit and wit, and at laſt drove him away through the mere force of ridicule. But my gentleman did not march off without whiſpering a challenge in my ear, and I had a formal one from him within three days. We met in the Green Park, and it was my fortune, after receiving a wound in my left arm, to run him through the

body

body—yet more fortunately, I ſhould add not dangerouſly; the ſurgeon that immediately attended him, pronounced his wound not at all dangerous.

This affair is myſterious: Mr. Fitzgerald my antagoniſt, poſitively aſſured me on the word of a man of honour, and his conduct throughout the affair, no ways impeached that title, that Miſs Benſon had carried on a long love affair with him in Suſſex, which concluded in an abſolute promiſe of marriage—and even an appointment of the very wedding-day at Mancheſter whither ſhe choſe to retire, as her family were ſtrongly inclined to marry her to another man. All this he inſiſted ſhe utterly diſregarded, and fairly deſerved the title he had given her of a mere jilt. Theſe declarations came from a man in the very extremity of life, for we were then going to engage. It is an ugly affair; I like it not. Nothing can be more evident than their being old acquaintance. Why ſhould their connection be juſt now diſſolved? Surely ſhe cannot be the mere girl of deſperate fortune that you pronounced her? I wiſh I had queſtioned Fitzgerald on that head, but it quite eſcaped me.

I muſt own, Frederick, that I am full of jealouſy and ſuſpicion. I have never declared my paſſion to Miſs Benſon, even in the moſt diſtant manner; but I nevertheleſs intereſt myſelf as much in every thing that concerns her, as if I was ſure of being her huſband next week. True it is, that gentleman might form improper and extravagant pretenſions, and imagine he had claims upon her, which were merely ideal. The turn of their converſation carried this appearance very much: If ſo, why ſhould I in the leaſt degree blame Miſs Benſon for what was abſolutely the folly of the

the man?—But to give you the other anecdote.

Laſt Wedneſday morning a young lady, decently dreſſed, came to enquire for Miſs Benſon. She was out with my ſiſter; but being ſhewn up to me in the dining-room, ſhe began the following converſation.

"I am very ſorry to find, ſir, that your lady is not at home. The infinite obligation which I and my poor unhappy mother are under to her, makes me eager to throw myſelf at the feet of our benefactreſs."

I perceived from this introduction that ſhe was under a total miſtake, ſuppoſing Miſs Benſon to be my wife; however, that I might know the tale, I replied,

"I heard her mention ſomething of this affair—but be ſo kind, madam, as to give me a full account of it. I don't doubt but I ſhall have entire reaſon to be fully ſatisfied with her conduct."

"I find, ſir, that our benefactreſs has kept her extraordinary merit ſecret; but it is too much for the honour of human nature to remain ſo."

"Pleaſe to proceed, madam, I am all attention."

"My mother, ſir, is an officer's widow, left without ſupport, and with the burthen of maintaining me. My poor father, who had ſerved thirty years in the army, never roſe higher than the rank of a lieutenant; and, though a good œconomiſt, did not leave my mother free from debts. She was arreſted ſoon after his death, and languiſhed ſome time in priſon. I attended her there to aſſiſt her with my needle in earning ſomething for our ſupport, and, in a miſerable manner paſſed ſome months a witneſs of my mother's virtues, her reſignation, and misfortunes. One day our jailor informed us that we were at liberty—

that her debt was discharged by a generous gentleman, and that he had left a purse of guineas to alleviate our future necessities. Astonished at this unexpected news, we eagerly enquired for so generous a benefactor. We were directed to the house of a man of considerable fortune in Grosvenor-square. While my mother sought for a cheap lodging, I went to make our humble acknowledgments to our benefactor. Upon being conducted into the room, where he was sitting alone, I started with surprise to find it was Sir George Milbourn. This Baronet, sir, having accidentally seen me at a Milliner's, where I carried home some work in my father's life time, made, without any ceremony, the most dishonourable proposals. I blushed at being thought capable of such a vice; and rejected his terms with a spirit and a tartness that suited not the lowness of my circumstances. He was piqued at the refusal, and the milliner threatened me with the loss of her work.

"The Baronet haunted me for some time, but met with nothing but such resolute rebuffs that he at last seemed to give over the pursuit. My poor father died, and left us, as I mentioned, at the mercy of several creditors."

"Oh! Madam (said he, seemingly surprised at seeing me) what is your business?"

"I am come, Sir George (replied I) to thank you in my own and my mother's name for rescuing us from a miserable imprisonment."

"I am very plain, Miss, in all these affairs—you must allow me to declare I love you—that it is for your sake only I have done an action which has the appearance of generosity. Surely you cannot be so idle as to refuse to listen to the addresses of one who is able to raise you and your mother to ease

eaſe and affluence?"

"As I came merely to return, with the trueſt ſincerity, our acknowledgments for your goodneſs, ſir, I did not expect this addreſs; and beg I may be excuſed from anſwering it."

"My deareſt! (ſaid he) I cannot excuſe you—you muſt really conſent to make me happy, and I will make you both rich and independent."

"Saying this he offered freedoms which I reſented. I was fired with the baſeneſs of his deſigns, and replied to him, with a warmth that threw him into a paſſion.

"Oh! oh! I find your are yet in your tantrums. Why do you not know that your and your mother's fate depend on my will—if I were only to ſpeak the word, I could hurry you both to jail again?"

"Be it ſo.—— You ſhall not find a baſe compliance had you twenty jails in your power. My mother would abhor her preſervation, if purchaſed at the expence of my honour."

"Honour truly!—The honour of ſuch beggars makes a very fine figure! Be not ſo ridiculous, but comply—ſave yourſelf from a priſon, and here is a purſe of guineas to begin houſekeeping."

"Rejecting his offers with ſcorn, he puſhed me out of the room, and the next day, calling at the milliner's, to enquire for work, Mrs. L—— had the aſſurance before two or three ladies, to reprove me ſeverely for my neglecting the Baronet's offers; adding, that I ſhould find myſelf and my mother ſpeedily lodged in a jail again, and bid me conſider better of it. I burſt from the ſhop with indignation: but Sir George kept his word—we were both arreſted at his ſuit, and lodged in our old priſon. My poor mother felt

the ſtroke in all its ſeverity—her health declined—ſhe viewed me with ſorrow—I was the tendereſt object of her love, and ſhe feared for nothing ſo much as for my ſafety. The change of our creditor, from a tradeſman to Sir George Milbourn, filled her with apprehenſions for me; which, however, I endeavoured by every means to allay. Nothing could fill me with a more horrid idea than my mother's declining health in the wretchedneſs of a priſon. I was ready to drop under it, when the jailor, about a week after our impriſonment, informed us once more we were at liberty, and conducted us to a hackney coach, the driver of which had received orders where to carry us. My mother was alarmed, and dreaded meeting with Sir George again; but we were carried to Iſlington, and the coach ſtopping at a houſe in an airy part of the town, left us there. The miſtreſs, an elderly woman, ſhewed us a ſmall but neat apartment, which ſhe ſaid was our's. At theſe words my mother aſked her with what deſign Sir George had done this?"

"Oh! I underſtand you (replied the woman) Sir George has nothing to do with it, you are not delivered out of priſon by him, but a good lady that has paid all your debts, and has agreed with me for this lodging for you both."

"We were ſtruck dumb with ſuch an amazing inſtance of generoſity in a perſon utterly unknown. We ſtifled the old woman with queſtions concerning our benefactreſs, and found that ſhe became acquainted with the affair by means of the Milliner for whom I worked; being one of thoſe ladies before whom ſhe had reproved me for rejecting Sir George's offer—that ſhe enquired who was creditor, and the ſum we were in priſon for? Being informed that we were indebted to Sir George

Milbourn

Milbourn something above seventy guineas, she sent the money to him immediately, demanding our discharge and a receipt in full; and this without letting him know who was our protector. Hesitations, refusals, and enquiries, on the part of Sir George, wasted three or four days; but being threatened peremptorily, he complied, with a bad grace, dismally vexed at being disappointed in what he thought certain game.—That our benefactress directly enquired for lodgings in the neighbourhood of London; and being recommended here, had agreed with Mrs. Jenkins, our landlady, for the rooms, and also for supplying us with whatever necessaries we wanted at her expence. We were eager to know who our blessed protectress was, that we might fly to express our gratitude; but she told us, she knew no more of her than that her name was Benson, and that she came from Germain Street; but she added that the lady designed soon to call upon us. Several days having elapsed, I came in search of this generous lady, sir, unable longer to contain those expressions of gratitude which so noble an action demands——Do you expect, sir, that your lady will return soon?"

"Madam, this lady is not my wife, nor any relation, but a friend of my sister's.—I expect her every minute. The narrative you have given is an affecting one—she has a noble mind, and demands admiration from every one. That I might know a fresh instance of her goodness, I deceived you at first by saying that I had heard something of this affair; but this is the first moment I knew any thing of the matter, though she has been in my family some time. I need not tell you that keeping such an action secret, shews the thorough goodness of the heart, that could feel

for the diſtreſs of another; and noble liberality, that could ſo quickly relieve it."

I had hardly finiſhed theſe words, when the door opened, and Miſs Benſon appeared. "There (ſaid I, to the officer's daughter,) is your benefactreſs."—She eyed her with a kind of worſhip for an inſtant, and dropping on one knee at her feet, burſt into a flood of tears, but could not ſpeak a word. Recovering herſelf, however, ſhe made a faultering ſpeech of thanks, acknowledgments, gratitude, &c. which Miſs Benſon, who till then knew her not, ſtopped her mouth by earneſtly deſiring her to name the affair no more; adding, "I have a little advice to offer your mother, and will call upon you ſoon." Miſs Sampher, for that I find is her name, took it as a hint to retire, and making her obeiſance, left the room.

I ventured to rally Miſs Benſon a little upon making a ſecret of this affair; telling her that Miſs Sampher had given me the recital of it, adding, "I ſuppoſe, madam, you keep the brighteſt ſide of your character a ſecret from the world, leſt it ſhould be too dazzling to the eyes of thoſe who could never conceive, and much leſs perform ſuch actions. Thoſe who can deſpiſe the ſex ſhould conſider the luſtre of your——"

"I think (replied ſhe, interrupting me) you have more reaſon to bluſh for your own ſex, than to compliment mine"—and with theſe words left the room.

Now, Maſon, who can be a daily ſpectator of the woman that has ſo generous a mind—that it is at the ſame time beauteous as the morn, and diſplays in every ſentiment, word, and idea the moſt refined imaginations—who can be ſuch a witneſs, and not love her to diſtraction? What an action

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is this releif of the ſufferers! How full of generoſity!—how full of modeſty! The ſum is conſiderable, yet we find ſhe does not limit her bounty to ſetting them free—ſhe enters at once upon a conſiderable expence, to protect and ſupport them after their enlargement—It is impoſſible to expreſs how much this action ſtrikes me!

But I wanted it not to be convinced that the mind of this woman is ſuperior to all praiſe. From ſeveral converſations of a ſerious caſt which I have had with her, I find that her ideas are amazingly enlarged; they are of that diſtinguiſhed kind—of that uncommon luſtre, that you liſten with pleaſure and inſtruction to ſentiments, which in all probability you never heard before. Her diſtinctions are refined, and ſhew a perſpicuity of thought that is very rare to be found. Of all the minds I ever was acquainted with, I never met with one that ſo well deſerved the name of cultivated. Her's is poliſhed by every elegance of life and manners, and illuminated by every branch of knowledge and learning. In a word, my friend, I find her approaching ſo near to the ſtandard of ideal perfection—I find her in every moment of her life ſo greatly ſuperior, that I could as ſoon think of ſeizing the thunder in the hand of Jove as declaring my paſſion to her. I feel myſelf impreſſed with ſo much awe, when I think of doing it, that I am tongue-tied—and muſt be ſilent for ever. She has not lately mentioned any thing of her journey to Huntingdonſhire, which makes me hope ſhe has changed her intention. Her time at preſent is ſpent chiefly in reading and attending pretty much to forwarding the workmen and tradeſmen, in fitting up and furniſhing her houſe.

My youngeſt brother, Bob, is come to town

I—

—I have not ſeen him before for ſome time. He is a raw youth, but if we can get him into the army he will be poliſhed. Lord C——gave me hopes of a pair of colours for him, but I depend very little on it. The lad has no fortune, and I ſhall find it, I fear, too pinching a matter to purchaſe for him; but I ſhall ſend him to pay his devoirs to Lord C——. This forwardneſs I believe is neceſſary in theſe affairs.

Let me hear from you as ſoon as you have leiſure.

RICHARD MELVILL.

LETTER XI.

Sir PHILIP EGERTON to Lord WILLIAM W—

INDEED, my Lord, you are much to blame in perſiſting to refuſe your acquieſcence in your father's propoſal. Lady Harriet F——beſides an agreeable perſon and an unexceptionable temper, will unite in your family two eſtates, whoſe contiguity makes them of ſuch infinite value to each other. Our long acquaintance allows me to aſſert, from the knowledge I have of you, that there can be no reaſon for rejecting a plan ſo evidently beneficial, and which can never offer again, but by that lurking paſſion for Signiora Zaffini, or Miſs Benſon. The whole hiſtory of your connections with thoſe ladies, when in Italy I have always told you was ſuch an ænigma to me, that I could never underſtand any of the motives of your conduct. Believe me, my lord, you never gave any ſatisfactory account of it. I know not whether you was, after all, in love with Signora Zaffini.—I know not why you neglected Miſs Benſon,

Benſon, while paſſionately in love with her—I know not how you came to incur the ſtigma of being diſhonourable to her, while I know there exiſts not a man of more unſullied honour—I know not how it happened that, with a lion-like bravery, you ſhould behave as if you had been a coward. In a word, my lord, after numerous explanatory letters, I muſt own myſelf quite in the dark. The Duke's conduct at preſent is ſenſible and conſiſtent, believe me, your's is indefenſibly inconſiſtent. Either come into his propoſals, or give ſo ſtrong a reaſon againſt them that the moſt dubious muſt remain ſatisfied. The offer of a ſettlement of five thouſand pounds a year, with ſix more of Lady Harriet's!—Sure, my lord, theſe are not to be trifled with!

I remain, &c.

PHIL. EGERTON.

LETTER XII.

Lord WILLIAM W—— to Sir PHILIP EGERTON.

MY dear Sir Philip, the reproaches in your laſt letter are extremely juſt, and your wonder no leſs ſo, I readily own, that my conduct has proved very eccentric, and that I am at preſent in a ſituation of doubt which gives an inconſiſtency to all my actions. But I am not ſo bad as I ſeem—and ſeveral circumſtances, which have hitherto appeared myſterious in my life, have had that character from your knowing them no better. You ſhall no longer reproach me with this ignorance; for I will now give you thoſe further explanations, that I hope will be ſufficient to remove the cloud that hangs between us at preſent.

It

It was at Parma that I was firſt introduced to the Marquis la Mina, and became acquainted with his niece Signora Zaffini; or rather, my friend, ſhe became acquainted with me. I think I have more than once given you her character—of a moſt inſinuating carriage—an agreeable freedom of converſation—a ſprightly wit—with beauty enough to ſet off and vary theſe manners. A young man of three and twenty, no enemy to the ſex, could hardly refrain from returning advances, which he could not but underſtand. In a word, I engaged in an intrigue with this lady, which laſted ſome months without any ſuſpicion in thoſe, who might have been concerned. Her conſummate art prevented diſcovery, for her fertile invention, in multiplying and extending reſources of ſecrecy and diſſimulation, exceeded all bounds. As to the ſtate of my heart at this period, it was in a very ſilly ſituation. I had an affection for my miſtreſs, much reſembling love—but not love—and at the very time that I entered and cheriſhed it, I felt that it would not laſt; but as to my having any remains of paſſion for her, you judge ſtrangely to make it even a matter of doubt. I parted with her without regret; and not long afterwards ſhe would probably have done the ſame by me.

But at Florence I found a fair one infinitely more deſerving of my attention, Miſs Benſon; ſhe was travelling through Italy with her uncle, a man of conſiderable fortune, and his family. I became acquainted with him and his charming niece at the ſame time. He was a man of ſtrict honour, great probity, and of an admirable underſtanding; the niece had all theſe qualities and a thouſand more—much exceeding, in my opinion, every thing I had ever read, heard, or ſeen among

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the ſex; for ſhe was an aggregate of mental and perſonal charms. Her converſation was ſo full of variety and inſtruction, that I could have liſtened to her, with improvement for ever. This woman I did love; nor will the affection ever ceaſe, were I to be introduced to ten thouſand others; for ſhe has rendered all the reſt of the ſex, ſuch mere figures and blanks in my eye, that I can think of no one elſe. This is the reaſon that I cannot come into my father's propoſal. I know not, nor can I any where learn, whether Miſs Benſon is alive or dead, ſingle or married. This uncertainty, you may eaſily ſuppoſe, is cruel enough; but you ſhall have the particulars of the affair.

Mr. Melliſh, her uncle, ſoon after my viſits at his houſe, became familiar, wrote to my father to inform him of them, and of their object. This was acting the part of a gentleman; what anſwer he received I know not; but I had a letter ſoon after from my father, with ſome general good advice, given in his negligent ſtile; from which I concluded, that he was quite indifferent about the affair. This was always the caſe, till the death of Lord H——threw that eſtate into the hands of an heireſs; from which time he has changed his note, and never ceaſed recommending to me to have ſome thoughts of Lady Harriet.

It is impoſſible to deſcribe perfectly to you, the uninterrupted happineſs I enjoyed during my ſtay at Florence. I had the converſation of Miſs Benſon daily; nothing could exceed the paſſion which I felt for her; but what made it peculiarly pleaſing, was my acting entirely a part, that even my judgment could not condemn. Attachments of this ſort are often made by men of rank, which they are aſhamed of; they feel, even in the moments of pleaſure, that they are acting beneath themſelves;

themſelves; that the birth and manners of their miſtreſs or her relations, are below them, or fit only to bring them into contempt. Such ideas to a ſenſible mind, are ſtings even in the midſt of happineſs; but I felt them not. This lady was born of a very antient and reſpectable family; her uncle the ſame; all of them rich in inheritance, and no upſtarts of the day. Mr. Melliſh was a man whoſe manners, converſation, and abilities, would do honour to any court in Europe. Miſs Benſon, educated under his eye, is the moſt accompliſhed woman of her age. What an advantage, with all this, to have ſeen and been intimate with the beſt company at home, in France, and in Italy! No, there were no aſſemblies more polite in Florence than thoſe which were held at Mr. Melliſh's.

But from the firſt moment I converſed with Miſs Benſon, all idea of her inferiority to the rank, I may one day poſſeſs in the world, vaniſhed. Her ideas, her manners, her carriage, every word and look convinced me, that this woman was fit to rank with princes and kings; for her virtues and her charms would throw more luſtre on the higheſt rank, than the higheſt rank could ever confer on them. Indeed, I felt the advantage of my converſe in Mr. Melliſh's houſe too much not to revere as well as love it. His houſe was indeed the temple of politeneſs and good ſenſe. I found more improvement, for I can give it no other term, more enlargement of idea, and a more refined urbanity to be gained in the converſation of this uncle and his niece, than in all the efforts of education that have been uſed to form me, ſo much inferior, even to a woman. In ſhort, Sir Philip, it was a ſituation in which I could not but love; and in which, love muſt reign without bounds.

bounds. I was no ſooner intimate with Miſs Benſon, than I openly declared to Mr. Melliſh, that if I was fortunate enough to gain her affections, I ſhould eſteem myſelf the happieſt of mankind—that I ſhould pay my addreſſes to her under the certainty of my father's approbation. I declared my paſſion to her, and met with a return that made me ſupremely bleſſed, but it was a return I only gueſſed at, ſo full of modeſt dignity! never did mortal enjoy greater, or at the ſame time more rational pleaſure than I—but, Sir Philip, the dæmon of miſchief was at work to deſtroy it all.

I had occaſion to go to Rome for about ten days upon ſome buſineſs of young Edmond's, who had brought himſelf into a ſilly ſcrape there. I took my leave of Mr. Melliſh and his excellent niece, promiſing that I would not exceed my time. Some unlucky accidents prolonged my ſtay a fortnight; but I wrote to Miſs Benſon the reaſon of it. On my return, as I was entering the foreſt of Ardi very early in the morning, I was ſet upon by three banditti. I had only Jaques with me, and he was unarmed. As for the poſt-boys, upon the firſt attack, they jumped from their horſes and fled. All three, without demanding any booty, fired on me at once, but I received no other hurt, than a ball's grazing my left arm. I fired a piſtol immediately at the perſon neareſt me, and ſhot him dead. At that inſtant I received another fire, which wounded me ſlightly on the hip: but upon my preſenting another piſtol, the two raſcals fled. Jaques was for riding after them, but I ſtopped him. I examined the pocket of the dead man, and found nothing about him worth remarking but this letter:

"Ardella,

"I now ſend ten piſtoles; fifty more will be your reward if you are ſure in your work—you may depend on advancement.

"* * * * *."

I knew the hand to be Zaffini's, and it ſtruck me with ſurpriſe and dread; it occurred at once to me, that ſhe had, out of revenge for my neglecting her, taken this method of having me diſpatched.

Jaques mounted the horſes, and conveyed me ſafe to Ardi; there I had my wounds dreſſed, and, when I was recovered, made all expedition to Florence. Upon going to Mr. Melliſh's, I found him gone to Venice. I underſtood at the next door, broken tidings of ſtrange accidents that had happened. I learned news even of myſelf; that Mr. Melliſh had purſued me to Turin, to fight me for ſome offence I had given to the lady that accompanied him. All this, as you may ſuppoſe, tortured me with dread and uncertainty. I was convinced, that the whole muſt be owing to a vile plot of Zaffini's; but how to unravel it, ſurpaſſed my art. By Mr. Melliſh and Miſs Benſon's leaving Florence ſo ſuddenly, it was evident that vile woman had, by ſome means, miſrepreſented me to them in a manner ſufficient to work all the effects ſhe could deſire or wiſh. I ordered a chaiſe immediately to go to Venice, that I might clear up ſo ſtrange an affair; but inattention to the wounds, which I had thought trifling, great fatigue, and the anxiety of my mind, brought me into ſuch a ſtate, that my ſurgeon pronounced ſuch a journey death to me, and very contrary to my inclination, inſtead of ſetting off for the journey, I meditated, he put me into bed.

I diſpatched

I diſpatched Jaques to Venice with letters, and ſtrict orders to gain ſight of Mr. Melliſh and Miſs Benſon, if poſſible; but he was driven from their door with the moſt contumelious language--my life was threatened, if ever I was met with, by all their domeſtics, and I was called, for what I know not, a deſpicable coward.

Before he returned to Florence, I had fallen into a mortal deſperate fever, which the heat of the ſeaſon made ſo dangerous, that all my phyſical attendants deſpaired of my life for above a month. I ſuffered three relapſes, each more alarming than the other. In a word, I kept my chamber no leſs than ſeventeen weeks; and when I left it for air and exerciſe, it was ſome time before I had any ſtrength. I was preſcribed a reſidence for ſome time in the mountains of Ierni, where they hoped the air and goats milk might have good effect. I tried this remedy for near two months, and found it ſucceſsful, though I was by no means reſtored to my former ſtrength and ſpirits. During my illneſs, Jaques made ſome diſcoveries which were important; he informed me, that he heard I had a great quarrel with Mr. Melliſh—that the latter ſent me a challenge which I refuſed, and ran away—that Mr. Melliſh purſued me through all Italy quite to Turin; that I was, for this baſe action, looked upon generally as a coward—with much information of the ſame ſort, that really aſtoniſhed me. All this muſt be the effect of ſome curſed contrivances of Zaffini; how ſhe could thus have played her cards I cannot comprehend; but it is true, that this devil incarnate has deſtroyed the peace both of my ſoul and body.

After ſeveral months languiſhing for health, in various parts of Italy and the ſouth of France, I gathered ſtrength enough to ſet out in ſearch of

the amiable woman that was the idol of my ſoul. I went firſt to Venice, then to Munich, to Vienna, to Dreſden, to Berlin, &c. at all which places I heard of her, but ſhe had left them long before my arrival; and I found afterwards that Mr. Melliſh had returned to England. I embarked at Calais, for the ſame country,—was at London ſome time making enquiries. I then underſtood that Mr. Melliſh was dead—a piece of information that grieved me exceedingly; but as to Miſs Benſon, I could learn no tidings of her. I laid the whole affair honeſtly and fairly before my father, and I found that he received it as a conſiderate and generous parent. He gave full credit to my deſcription of Miſs Benſon and her uncle—ſaid that he ſhould be the laſt of mankind to oppoſe my wiſhes, in caſe I could gain ſo accompliſhed a woman for my wife, on whom I had actually fixed my affections; but obſerved, that ſhe muſt be certainly dead, or I muſt before now have heard of her. Adding, however, that I ought to make it my buſineſs to find out the truth; that if ſhe was alive, and ſingle, as I left her, he would never be the man to oppoſe my happineſs.

I left England, and reſided ſome months at Paris; there I expected to hear ſome tidings of her: for I have often obſerved that people, who have reſided agreeably in that elegant center of politeneſs, ſeldom fail of returning to it with pleaſure. But I did not find her. I heard, however, that Miſs Benſon was contracted in marriage to a Prince of Furſtenburgh, being at the court of Munich. This intelligence ſurprized me; for I had been at Munich after ſhe had left it, and had heard nothing of it. But in a ſecond company, hearing the ſame intelligence, and that ſhe was actually married there, I determined to ſet out immediately,

and,

and, accordingly went to Munich; but, on my arrival there, found that three parts in four of the report were falſe. The Prince of Furſtenburgh actually made offers to her, but ſhe refuſed him. This intelligence pleaſed me not a little, though I could ſcarcely hope to reap the leaſt benefit from it.

In this ſituation, Sir Philip, I have remained ever ſince. I am utterly ignorant of the fate of the woman I adore. My father, under the preſumption, that ſhe is dead or married, preſſes me to wed Lady Harriet; but never will I become the huſband of any other woman than Miſs Benſon. Her excellencies ſo far outſhine all other female merit, that I ſhould be ſtrangely wanting to myſelf to attempt to think of another after once loving her. The greateſt terror of my ſoul, and what conſtitutes my higheſt miſery at preſent, is the idea of her death. I own, I fear, the arts of the deteſted Zaffini. If ſhe ſhould have planned and ſucceeded in any diabolical ſcheme of revenge on her innocence, I am for ever the moſt miſerable of mortals.

Here, my dear Sir Philip, you ſee the real ſtate of my affairs and heart—I think I have fully explained all thoſe myſteries, which you have thought ſo many contradictions in my conduct—how Zaffini compaſſed her aim I know not myſelf, and therefore am utterly unable to explain it to you. But obſerve, my friend, that I am bleeding of the wounds my heart received in the loſs of Miſs Benſon; for if ever a perſon was at once ſnatched from heaven, and plunged in the darkeſt hell, it muſt ſurely be me. Every moment of abſence only increaſes that indelible love which preys upon my ſoul—it is engraven in my heart. Never will the image of that ſuperior woman be obliterated

from my mind!—all life is but a blank!—all joy is tasteless!—all society detestable!—the sun shines no more to me!—I have lived on the road between Paris and London—I take many a tour to Florence, to Munich, to Vienna—I gaze with fond delight on the house, which was once the seat of all my joys; and am now in treaty to purchase it at an extravagant price, that every moment of my life may be devoted to the memory of her I love. In this room I first saw her; there she sat, when she received my vows of fidelity; here I heard the converse of her noble uncle, and hung with rapture on the accents of her amiable tongue! These are ideas that will drive me to distraction speedily—I do not endeavour to prevent it; for misery is already my portion; and its continuance seems to threaten a period to my existence. I long only for one thing before I die—it is revenge. I have my emissaries abroad, with the promise of boundless treasure, if they can secure Zaffini alive, and bring her within my power. When I think of the mortal misery she has brought on me, I lose all sense of shame, all ideas of manhood; for I believe I could feast my eyes with seeing her impaled alive. I become furious with the idea. Here let me close this dismal narrative. Have I now satisfied you of the absurdity of my father's urging marriage to me for the sake of an estate? Were twenty crowns at stake, would you have such a wretch as me stretch out an arm to seize them? No, Sir Philip, I have matter deeper in my soul—I cannot write to the Duke in these terms; but prithee take it upon thee to convince him of the impropriety of injuring a young innocent lady of a noble family and fortune so highly, as to think of making her wretched by being the partner of so miserable a being. It must

not

not be—but withal let not his Grace know the extremity of my misery; he loves me too much to bear it without an emotion, that I fear would be fatal to him; conceal the worst circumstances, but let him know enough to lay aside for ever all ideas of my marriage with this or any other lady. I look for this through your friendship; do not disappoint me.

Yours,

WILL. W———

LETTER XIII.

Mr. MELVILL to Mr. FREDERICK.

MY dear Frederick, Miss Benson's residence at my house, makes it the scene of action for a variety of characters to exhibit on; we have a new one brought on our stage by that amiable lady's generosity to the Samphers. The other day Sir George Milbourne was announced to Miss Benson; at the mention of his name her colour came with a transient gleam of indignation in her countenance that pleased me. Upon being seated he addressed himself to Miss Benson and my sister, who were sitting near each other.

"Ladies, I must request your pardon for this intrusion, but one of you, I have not the honour to know which, has been so very generous of late, that I was desirous of knowing the motive, as it was exerted quite at my expence." After pausing a little, and finding that they either did not, or would not, comprehend him.——"I mean, ladies, the rescuing those wretched culprits from prison—a woman, Sampher by name, and her daughter."

"This

"This is the lady (said my sister) who was the author of that generous action."

"Madam (returned the baronet, addressing himself to Miss Benson) may I beg the pourquoi?"

"You must allow me, sir, to return your pourquoi, why did you assume to yourself a power over them by buying in their debts?"

"Upon my credit, madam, you put your queries with a vivacity, that gives a lustre to your countenance. I had just, very just—and solid reasons." And then, with a very significant air of mysterious importance, brandishing a pinch of snuff with a finger, on which was a very fine diamond ring.—"You have been much deceived—you have indeed, madam."

"Nothing more likely, Sir George—we women have not the nice distinctions that do so much honour to many of your sex."

"Such ladies as you, madam (eying her with particular complacency) are possessed of every distinction in life—Nature we must allow, after all, is to be forgiven for producing such beings as the Sampher's, while she makes amends for so many errors in you"——

"That I think is what may be called a very well turned compliment; pray, sir, was it addressed to my person or my understanding?"——

"'Pon honour, madam, I do not address myself to the understanding of the fair sex; they have charms that set the heart in a flame, but the depth of their judgment, is a matter of less importance."

"So the most you allow a fine woman is to be a pretty fool?"

"I shall make an exception with you, madam—you are a pretty wit."

"Sir George, I am not in debt—you certainly compliment

compliment me to-day, in order to put me in prison to-morrow."

"Pardon me, fair lady, those eyes of your's are more likely to imprison the hearts of all my sex."

"Miss Sampher's eyes too, Sir George, are very killing!"

"Really, madam (looking silly and twirling his watch chain) I have forgot what she is, my business in that affair was with the old woman."

"Fie, Sir George! what! a man of your gallantry plant the artillery of your elegant person against the heart of an old woman, when a young one was in the case?"

"My elegant person! ha ha; egad, madam, you have a talent at ridicule that would shine on the stage; but, madam, you utterly mistake that affair."——

"As your taste carries you so strongly to antient ladies, I fear I am stricken in years—for you have been complimenting me."

"As I before observed, madam, it is highly necessary that these people whom you have protected, should———."

"Return to prison, I suppose, Sir George! Can you make love to the old woman no where but in a dungeon?"

"I assure you you have been guilty of——."

"Being pretty—and you are so gallant a man, that ———."

"Madam, I crave your patience, you must allow me to ———."

"Once more pay your polite addresses to Mrs. Sampher ———."

"I do not understand this, (angrily) they are thieves in contracting debts which they cannot pay, and I am come to desire explicitly your designs

ſigns with them; for I conſider them as depending upon me."

"Depending upon you?"

"Yes, on me—for here is a bank note for the whole amount of the expences, madam, I do not chuſe to have my debt paid in the irregular manner you have done."

"So your meaning, Sir George, is to pay me the money now?"

"It is, madam."

"Very good; to give you an opportunity the week following to claim it as a debt, and throw me into gaol with the pureſt and moſt virtuous deſigns in the world."

"I expected you to be ſerious, madam."

"Perhaps you now deſire it?"

"Indeed I do—I want to finiſh the buſineſs?"

"Then, Sir, you ſhall know my mind in few words. Your conduct to the Sampher's ſhews you to be a baſe deſigning villain."

"How!"

"Who by means of wealth, proſtituted to the loweſt purpoſes, aim at nothing but deſtroying that virtue in others, to which yourſelf have no pretenſions."

"Zounds, madam!"

"Your buying in the debts of a diſtreſſed, unfortunate widow, and an orphan daughter, merely with a vile deſign—your throwing them into priſon becauſe ſhe would not proſtitute herſelf to ſo deteſted a monſter, proves, Sir, that your ſoul is a compound of meanneſs and cruelty."

"This, methinks, is fine ranting, but your nymph ſhall pay for it."

"You are much miſtaken. I am their protector; my fortune, though not great, ſhall be exerted

exerted in their defence; they ſhall ſet your villainy at defiance."

The Baronet would hear no more, but looking with great fire at Miſs Benſon, ſhe returned it with infinite contempt, and he made his retreat with a precipitation, that proved him fairly beaten off the field.

"There, ſaid Miſs Benſon, goes one of our modern fine gentlemen? This ſpecies of animals in London—what a credit he does to your ſex, Mr. Melvill!"

"Madam, I hope there are not many of Sir George's character. There would be much fewer, if they met with ſuch reproof as you gave him this morning."

"I gave it the readier, becauſe I recollected his perſon, though he had forgotten mine. His father was a friend of my uncle, who frequently in my hearing foretold that George would turn out an illiterate coxcomb, and more than once recommended a different education for a lad that would one day inherit a good fortune. He was his mother's darling, who never ceaſed inculcating ideas, which ſhe thought were adapted to his future rank. Had he been a Duke they would have ſpoiled him, but being only a trumpery Baronet, they made him truly ridiculous. While a ſtripling, ſhe indulged him in almoſt every vice, that could debaſe his character when a man; and now we find him the mere ſquanderer of money for doing miſchief to other people."

I made my offer to Miſs Benſon to be uſeful to her in any reſpect ſhe approved, in patronizing Mrs. Sampher and her daughter, but ſhe, thanking me, replied, that ſhe could depend on their own prudence, and the attention of the people where they lodged.

My

My heart grows very heavy, Frederick. Miſs Benſon's houſe is almoſt ready for her. What I am to do when ſhe goes, I know not; but I believe to make my exit then, would be the wiſeſt plan; for it would be the concluſion of a delicious dream, which cannot be ended but with miſery. We ſhall certainly be numbered among the neareſt of her friends, but that by no means ſatisfies me. It muſt, however, ſatisfy me, for I cannot ſpeak to her of what my heart feels. I plainly ſee, that ſhe is not the leaſt affected towards me; I mean further than mere friendſhip and politeneſs. My eyes have, more than once, ſpoken truth to her; but ſhe has not ſeemed to underſtand a ſyllable of their meaning, and I really believe ſhe thinks no more of me in the light of a lover than the moon does. Indeed, I do not think ſhe will quickly find a man that is made for her; for ſhe has rather an acrimonious way of thinking of the ſex, and drops general ſpeeches now and then, conceived in ſuch ſtrong terms, that I think ſhe would allow of but very few exceptions. Notwithſtanding my paſſion for this uncommon woman, I am not ſo blind but I can ſee this failing in her character, which ſome times eſcapes her in a manner that ſhews too much rancour and contempt, and yet much is to be ſaid in extenuation of it. Her own abilities are ſuperior to every thing ſhe finds in common among us—her learning, her accompliſhments are the ſame; and while mankind look down on her, loſt in the general inſignificancy of the ſex, with that air of ſuperiority we are ſo apt to uſe, how can we wonder at her retorting the ill founded contempt with ten-fold vehemence; and having been rather unfortunate in the group of men that have been connected with her by relationſhip, or accident, ſhe has a caſt

caſt of ridicule ready for all; and has a talent of preſently finding out the weak part of every character ſhe converſes with. She is perfectly forgiving and kind to the women, but, I muſt ſay, ſhe has no mercy on the men.

Menill cannot bear her; you know he has a moſt ſilly way of laughing at the women in all converſation, holding them as cheap as poſſible, in any reſpect beyond the walks of domeſtic life; he keeps his Kitty cloſely in thoſe bounds, though a good fine girl, and by no means a fool; and if ſhe was not contented would, I dare ſay, preſently change her for another of the ſiſterhood. When I told him that Miſs Benſon was far ſuperior to all other women, he only laughed at me, and concluded that love had blinded me to her defects; and he came one day to dinner, expecting nothing but a fine woman with a common ſhare of underſtanding—he trifled much in converſation, as if perfectly off his guard, and dropping two or three hints injurious to the ſex, Miſs Benſon did not let them eſcape her, but entering further into the chat, gave Menill aſkaunt ſeveral ſtrokes of keen wit that made him riggle on his chair; and on his explaining himſelf in a laughing negligent manner, ſhe with more eaſe drew forth all his peculiarities of thinking, and ridiculed them with a ſeverity that flead him alive, but never violated the bounds of the utmoſt politeneſs. In a word, ſhe bound him down until he had not an idea at liberty; and then diverted us not a little at the ridiculouſneſs of his ſituation; the whole in ſuch a ſtrain of irony on the inferiority of the female ſex, that I am much miſtaken if my friend Menill will not be cured.

Adieu,

I remain truly yours,

G RICH. MELVILL.

LETTER XIV.

Miſs BENSON, to Miſs EMILIA WATSON.

MY dear Emilia deſerves many more acknowledgments than are in my power to give for the kindneſs of her invitation to Huntingdonſhire. Do not forget to preſent my ſincere thanks to Mr. Watſon for uniting with you in this mark of your tenderneſs. I ſhould readily have troubled you, but I found my preſence neceſſary in London in order to get my houſe, &c. ready to receive me, and I was fortunate enough to find that Miſs Melvill and her brother are people of ſo much good ſenſe and conſideration, that they will, notwithſtanding their extreme politeneſs, allow me to be perfectly at my eaſe. When I found that I could ſtay with them without being a troubleſome gueſt, I readily conſented, and muſt find out ſome proper method, if I can, of returning their civilities.

I am at laſt got into Pall-Mall, and have regulated my affairs and houſehold in ſuch a manner that I hope to live at leaſt at my eaſe. The houſe is an agreeable one: I have two parlours on the ground floor, and a large dining room, with a pretty dreſſing room, on the firſt floor. Theſe four rooms I have furniſhed rather elegantly. The pictures, &c. Mr. Melliſh left me, with the cabinets I collected with his aſſiſtance, are no ſlight ornaments to them. Moſt of my ſex would envy my ſituation much, but not without reaſon. Mr. Melvill got me a very grave, well behaved fellow for my coachman; he likewiſe procured me a footman, and Miſs Melvill has recommended a cook and another maid; for my own ſervant I took the young woman from Suſſex, whoſe father, a clergyman, died and left her deſtitute—I believe you have

have heard me mention her more than once. Mrs. Henry is in her poſt, and fills it much better than I expected; indeed this was the part of my eſtabliſhment which I had the moſt fears about. I had no doubt of her good humour— and without the leaſt fear of her giving me any offence; but I ſuſpected that ſhe had been ſo long in retirement, that her carriage and manner would be rather too awkward for going every where with me. In this I am agreeably diſappointed; ſhe has bought ſome handſome things, makes a very good old woman's figure, without the attendant weakneſs that is too often found. One point I ſhall attend to as a very neceſſary one, which is œconomy; not to lay up money, for I want it not, but to take care in the entrance of this new way of life, which is new to me, to keep within my income, and have always a few hundred pounds at command for emergencies.

I muſt have a country houſe, for I am fond of the country, and ſhould by no means like to remain in an empty city; but this I ſhall not trouble myſelf about till next ſpring, as I ſhould diſlike fixing in a place without ſeeing it at the ſeaſon to which it is adapted. The neighbourhood of London I ſhall prefer, as being moſt agreeable, free from the trouble of long journeys, and, as I think, the fineſt country in England. When I hear of a little eſtate within twenty miles of town, with a decent houſe upon it, I ſhall purchaſe it. I have no objection to hiring in London, but ſhould much diſlike it in the country.

I find my income will be, clear of all my late expences, near twelve hundred pounds a year; and I do not yet foreſee that my expences will be more than nine hundred, and yet I allow liberally for every thing; ſo, my dear Emilia, I am with-

in the bounds which I am desirous of not exceeding. A woman has not, nor cannot have the same weight or respect in the world as a man of equal fortune; and she is more liable to accidents and exigencies, which nothing but a round sum of money, ready to be applied to any use that happens, can secure her against.

But I have that on my mind, Emilia, which hurts its enjoyment, and gives me some unhappy hours; while this is the case, and I blush to think what little reason I have to see any end of it, I should, in prudence, take care, and not let other matters, that are in my power, ever run counter to my wishes. One misery is enough, and there is nothing of which I have so much detestation as the idea of that species of dependance on one's inferiors, or that cramped situation which flows from a want of attention to œconomy.

I have a room, Emilia, which I call your's, and believe me your occupying it will add not a little to the happiness which I can expect to reap from futurity. I need not tell you that Mr. Watson's company at the same time would give me great pleasure.

* * * * *

Last Tuesday I was at court.—The Sardinian Ambassador remembered me, and, addressing me with much politeness, enquired after his old friend, Mr. Mellish. It was with no slight sorrow I told him of his death, and the good old man quite wept to hear it. The King, observing his emotion, came up, and enquired the cause? The Marquis replied, "This young lady, Sire, is a niece of an old friend of mine, whose company, with her's, at Turin, I much esteemed."

"You

"You have been in Italy, Madam," ſaid the King.

"Yes, Sire (I replied) I reſided there two years with the late Mr. Melliſh my uncle."

"Melliſh!—Melliſh!—Sure I remember him!—was he not a brigadier general?"

"No, Sire, but in the earlier part of his life he had the honour of being your Majeſty's Envoy at Venice."

"Oh! I remember him well—was he your uncle?

"Yes, Sire, and in his death I ſuſtained an irreparable loſs."

"I am much concerned at it, madam."

"Your Majeſty (ſaid the Ambaſſador) had not a more valuable ſubject than that gentleman, nor can your dominions boaſt a more accompliſhed woman than this lady."

The King made me ſome compliments, and paſſed on in the circle, but the Marquis de Vigniola deſired to know where I lived at preſent. I told him of my ſettling lately in Pall-Mall; and he ſaid he ſhould take the firſt opportunity of waiting on me.

The Earl of C—— ſaw me, and immediately expreſſed his ſorrow for the loſs of Mr. Melliſh. He made enquiries after my preſent ſituation, and aſked me, ſmiling, after news from Suſſex. You know his eſtate is there, and that my father has always oppoſed his parliamentary intereſt in a manner which well deſerves the epithet abſurd. Some other of my uncle's friends were there, who, recollecting me, were much more polite than I had any reaſon to expect. But I am not diſpleaſed to find that they do not ſhun me after the death of that uncommon man, who claimed and

commanded reſpect from every one that came near him.

As to company, my Emilia, I am ſomewhat particular in my ideas of what is deſirable in that point. People whoſe notions are ſuperior to thoſe of the vulgar, are generally fond of aſſociating with companions of parts, abilities or wit; and boaſt, even to affectation, of diſregarding rank; but this is in oppoſition to inferior claſſes, who viſit with a ſatisfaction exactly proportioned to the rank of the houſe they are going to. But I muſt deſire to ſteer in this reſpect the middle courſe; the conduct of the latter is that of a fool, and that of the former is generally mixed with other marks of a meer humouriſt. I have found, in a circle of no ſmall experience, that people of rank, who have been uſed to a high ſphere of life, are, upon an average, more accompliſhed, and in poſſeſſion of many more ideas than their inferiors. The want of that poliſhing and politeneſs which is common among the great, very often makes the company of their inferiors diſguſting. Their fortunes have generally been attended with better educations, and a much more extended ſphere of motion, conſequently their knowledge ſhould be proportionably ſuperior. I am ſenſible however, that the exceptions to this rule are numerous, that plebeians often are finiſhed characters, while the higheſt nobility offers inſtances of contemptibleoness.

There is ſomething ſingular in the life of the Marquis de Vignicla. Mr. Melliſh was extremely intimate with him at Turin, where he frequented our houſe very much. I have had long converſations with him, in which he more than once gave me ſeveral particulars of his hiſtory, that ſeemed to border more on romance than real life;

life; but, were nevertheleſs well known to the whole court. The Duke of Savoy, paſſing through a retired place among the mountains of that province, his attendants loſt their way, and the Duke, riding up to a houſe, wherein was nobody but a lad of about eight years old, the Duke enquired his road; the boy, with much vivacity, told him; but his highneſs fearing leſt he ſhould miſunderſtand him; aſked him if he could not go and conduct him right. Yes, replied the boy, I will go and get my aſs immediately. He was mounted in an inſtant and rode off, the Duke following him, and leaving his attendants to make the beſt of their way by themſelves. The boy entered into converſation, and entertained the ſtranger much with the keenneſs of his remarks, and the ſprightlineſs of his replies. When he had conducted him to the high road, the Duke ſaid, "I ſhould like ſuch a boy as you in my ſervice." Should you, ſir? (replied the lad) I ſhould be very glad to ſerve you." What can you do?" returned the Duke. "I will do whatever I am bid, (ſaid the boy) and I will be very faithful." Pleaſed with theſe replies, his Highneſs bid him follow, and upon coming to the little town of Suna, diſpatched a meſſenger to the houſe from whence he had taken the lad, to inform his father, that he had entered into the ſervice of an unknown gentleman; but that he was ſafe, and would be taken care of. Upon his joining his attendants, the Duke gave orders, that the boy ſhould travel with them to Turin upon his own aſs, without any change of garb. Young Samon, for ſo he was called, was aſtoniſhed to find, that his new maſter was no leſs than the Duke of Savoy; but at the ſame time no leſs pleaſed at having ſecured the favour of his ſovereign.

The

The Duke had hardly got two ſtages, before a man in great agitation came riding up, and begged to ſpeak with the gentleman, upon urgent buſineſs. On being told, that the gentleman he enquired for was the Duke, he ſeemed much ſurpriſed; but going immediately up to him. "Noble Prince, (ſaid he) may the loweſt of your ſubjects preſume to requeſt the return of a ſon?" The Duke upon underſtanding his errand, told him that his ſon ſhould be taken great care of, and promoted in his ſervice. The old man did not ſeem pleaſed—he was embarraſſed; and ſtill repeated his requeſt: but the Duke, at laſt ſeeming to be diſpleaſed with the inconſiderateneſs of the father, in preventing the promotion of his child, the old man ſaid with ſome emotion—"He is not what he ſeems, he is of a noble family." Surpriſed at this eclairciſſement, the Duke, advancing from his attendants, and taking the old man aſide, gained the information he wanted concerning the boy, and gave him the title of the Marquis of Vigriola, a title, however, which was without an eſtate, for the old Marquis had loſt his eſtate in the inſurrection, which had ſome years before happened in Savoy. There certainly was ſomething myſterious in the intelligence given by the old man, but the Duke would never divulge it.

The young Marquis was taken to Court, raiſed to a ſmall poſt for his maintenance, entered in the Ducal academy, and was brought up in the practice of genteel exerciſes. At ſixteen the Duke gave him a commiſſion in his own regiment of foot, and found from repeated converſations with him, that he had gained a treaſure in the youth, who had made an uncommon progreſs in all his exerciſes, and was become a good ſcholar. His perſon

perſon was above the common ſize, and his air and carriage diſtinguiſhed him even in the midſt of a court. He was promoted gradually, till he had a regiment given him. A war breaking out, in which the Duke of Savoy took part with the enemies of France; the Marquis of Vignicla had many opportunities of ſignalizing his courage; and being entruſted with ſeveral commands of importance, he became an excellent ſoldier, and was much depended on by his maſter.

In this war the Marquis was preſent at the taking of a town by ſtorm in Piedmont, and uſed his utmoſt endeavours to reſtrain the barbarities ſo commonly practiſed on thoſe horrible occaſions. He was calling the ſoldiers off from a purſuit, when a tumult at a convent attracted his notice. He hurried to the gates, fearing leſt the men ſhould break in. He found the Lady Abbeſs and her nuns in dreadful conſternation, expecting the greateſt evils, from a party of ſoldiers which were plundering their hall. He pacified them, drove out the fellows, and reſtored their tranquility, but loſt his own—He fell in love with a nun; and engaged in an intrigue, which might have been of dangerous conſequence. I have heard ſeveral particulars of this affair, which were not, upon the whole, to his honour.

In the reign of Charles Emanuel II. King of Sardinia, he was ſent upon an important buſineſs into that iſland, to meet the ſtates of it; but was, in the voyage, taken by a Turkiſh galley, and carried priſoner to Conſtantinople; there he reſided but a little time, as he ſoon gained his liberty; but he was there long enough to be concerned in ſeveral intrigues, which were near being fatal to him.

After a life of uncommon activity, the King made

made him his ambaſſador extraordinary to Great Britain, with a conſiderable appointment. On his preparing for his embaſſy we were at Turin, and Mr. Melliſh having been before introduced to him, the friendſhip commenced between them was eaſily cemented from a ſimilarity in their characters; for the Marquis de Vigniola is of an open generous temper, which is not often found with the higheſt poliſh that politeneſs can give; but they are united in him in a manner that could not fail of pleaſing my uncle, who gave him excellent information concerning the ſtate of England, which proved of much uſe to him.

* * * *

Tueſday.

The Marquis, my dear Emilia, paid me a friendly viſit this morning, for which I think myſelf much indebted. He converſes with all the fire and vivacity of youth; and is as keen and penetrating in his remarks and obſervations, as if he had lived in England half his life. I was deſirous of knowing what he thought of the nation.

"Why, madam, (he replied) the Engliſh are a ſenſible generous people, from whom more valuable individuals may be ſelected than from any people in the world. But your mob is very extenſive. I think there are more inferior characters to be found in every company a man of rank can frequent, than can be met with in moſt other countries."

"But your excellency does not ſufficiently conſider that the appearance of inferior characters, which offend you, is not owing to their abounding more in this country, than in others, but to the

the greater liberty enjoyed here; which is in its effects ſo intimately connected with all ranks of people, their aſſemblies, their actions, their manners, and their amuſements; that you can produce no inſtance of national character which is not materially affected by it. In countries where the power of the ſovereign is arbitrary, ranks are much clearer diſtinguiſhed. People that have accidentally become rich, do not mingle with thoſe of the nobleſt birth; of courſe, you ſee few or none of thoſe characters, which are obſervable in all Engliſh aſſemblies."

"But this reaſoning, madam, which however I admit to be juſt, only proves ſeveral evils inſtead of one. This liberty, about which you are ſo intereſted, is productive of the evil of which I complain, but the exiſtence of the evil you do not attempt to contradict. It muſt undoubtedly much affect the national character; for foreigners cannot diſcriminate among the various members of a numerous aſſembly, or the perſons that form the ſmalleſt parties. It would be ridiculous to go to the loweſt of the vulgar for a national character. The liberal and fair method is to mingle with the beſt company, and draw your concluſion from what you ſee at the politeſt aſſemblies. If liberty empties the kennel into the drawing-room of the Prince, or the aſſemblies of the great, the maſs there found muſt certainly be taken as the fair repreſentative of the nation; and if vulgar characters abound, vulgarneſs will, in a certain meaſure, be the ſtigma on the country at large. Nor can it be replied, with any degree of propriety, that a foreigner ſhould not form his ideas from ſuch mixed aſſemblies; but diſtinguiſh the polite from the low. If that was to be the criterion, the enquiry would end in reducing all nations to a level,

level, by finding that there were many excellent individuals in every one; and therefore Italy and Sweden, Spain and Poland, would all appear in the ſame light."

"But I think your excellency confines yourſelf too much to the higher ranks of people. The lower ones, even the mob (as they are called) demand attention; they are a very material part of the nation; and the diſtinctions of national character are to be found among them much more readily than among their betters. The ſuperior claſſes in all countries are like the excellent individuals you mentioned. They are every where pretty much the ſame; travelling, reading, liberal intercourſe with one another, tend to give a ſameneſs to their characters; but nature is left to work her own effects in the lower claſſes. Accordingly we ſee a very ſtrong diſtinction among thoſe of every nation. And this difference is, I think, that which alone deſerves the name of diſtinctions, with reſpect to national character."

"I muſt own, I hate the licentiouſneſs of your lower claſſes in England—your liberty, as you are pleaſed to call it, degenerates into brutality, and even the moſt terrible tyranny. In what other country could you ever behold the ſpectacle which I ſaw the other day? I met a great mob, with a well dreſſed Italian juſt arrived who was walking from his ſhip which landed him at London, to his lodgings. The mob inſiſted of his acclamations in praiſe of ſome favourite of theirs, but the gentleman underſtanding nothing they ſaid, could not comply. As a puniſhment for which they rolled him three times in a moſt filthy kennel, till he was almoſt ſmothered. I ſaw the poor wretch juſt as he eſcaped from their hands, and figured to myſelf the ſentiments he muſt have of a nation which

which calls itſelf civilized, but allows its mob to give a foreigner, the moment he is landed ſo cordial a reception. All things are to be judged of by their effects, not their qualities; the latter looks only to what ought to be, but the former is the reſult of experience. How can ſuch liberty be praiſed, while it ſubjects you to the moſt deteſtable tyrranny?"

"I am very clear that liberty is the greateſt bleſſing any nation can enjoy, but it would be prepoſterous to aſſert that it is unattended with evils. Your Excellency ſpeaks not of liberty, but the abuſe of liberty; for which reaſon you prefer an arbitrary to a limited government. But, my Lord, are there not evils much greater under the tyranny of a monarch? what wretched poverty and miſery among all the lower claſſes! what regular oppreſſion from the monarch downwards, which, like the encreaſing velocity of a deſcending weight, lights at laſt, ſo heavily on the heads of the poor, as to grind them into wretchedneſs! Beſides, all countries have now and then their mobs, and ſome of them, a mob much more to be dreaded than our's. Every county has individuals among the lower people that are a ſcandal to ſociety. Government may prevent the commiſſion of great vices, but it cannot make wicked men good. Another point, ſir, that is not to be forgotten, is a common blunder made in all countries, that of judging of the national character by the inhabitants of the capital. Great cities every where contain the worſt people of a whole country; they attract all the ill humours of the ſtate, as certainly as the magnet attracts the iron. You muſt go to the provinces to ſee the characters of the lower claſſes, you will not there find mobs, or

ſcarcely any of that brutality, which ſo much offends you here."

"Pardon me, madam; I grant the country is free from mobs; but I have made ſeveral excurſions from London to the ſeats of ſome of the nobility; and I have obſerved, in the country, the ſame inſolence and brutality, that I ſee at London, in proportion to their numbers. I have been with an Engliſh Earl, who has been forced to make way for a couple of clowns. I have been driven into a ditch by the impudence of a waggoner. And in a ſhort reſidence I made in Surry, not long ſince, I found that the only method of keeping myſelf free from the ſuperiorities of the lower rabble, was to avoid all meetings, or intercourſe with them; conſidering them as ſo many tygers let looſe to devour every body better than themſelves. In a walk I took with Lady L. ſhe had a favourite Italian grey hound with her. We met three ruſtics, the dog did not make way time enough for gentlemen of ſuch importance. One of them kicked the poor beaſt with infinite brutality. I was advancing to cane the raſcal, but they all three ſet themſelves in array, with their tools in their hands, and would have deſtroyed me, had I attempted it; at the ſame time making uſe of curſing and abuſe, which ſeems to be the only language they are perfectly maſters of. Now, Madam, is this liberty deſirable? Is it neceſſary to nurſe up theſe vipers by the foſtering hand of liberty, in order to ſting thoſe, who gave them this precious privilege of licentiouſneſs?"

The Marquis continued for ſome time vehemently inveighing againſt Engliſh freedom. He carries his ideas of it to exceſs, but I am not at all ſurpriſed at it. All foreigners, who have been here, agree in the ſame tale; and think the tyranny

ny of a great monrch and his nobles infinitely preferable to that of the ſcum of the earth. But, from the obſervations I made in travelling through countries, where deſpotiſm reigned, I am convinced that the evils of which they complained, are but ſlight and paſſing clouds in a beautiful hemiſphere; whereas in countries differently governed, the whole ſky is one dark cloud of miſery, and deſpair. At the ſame time I muſt allow that the inſolence of our common people is beyond all example and all bounds—and that the liberty of their ſuperiors, is to the full as equivocal, while they are allowed this dangerous licentiouſneſs, as theirs would be, if trampled on like their brethren in France.

Adieu, my dear Emilia,

I remain truly yours,

JULIA BENSON.

LETTER XV.

Mr. MELVILL to Mr. FREDERICK.

MY dear friend, ſhe has left us, and with her is gone all my happineſs. While I had the pleaſure of being in her company, love was a regular ſource of delight to me, but now ſhe is gone I feel ſuch an inanity of being, ſuch an inquietude of heart, that I find the force of my paſſion ſtronger every day. This woman is certainly the moſt amiable of her ſex. I muſt give you a freſh inſtance of that generous ſpirit, which diſtinguiſhes all her actions; I told you in a former letter, that Lord C. had promiſed to remember my brother in the next promotion of officers; and I ſent the lad to wait on him by way of

reminding his Lordſhip. His reception was very cool, and the promotion was made, but nothing in it for Bob. Soon after a commiſſion was ſent me for him, of an enſigncy in the fifty-ſixth; and in a fortnight after a vacancy among the lieutenants happening, a purchaſe was made, and the commiſſion likewiſe ſent me. I was ſurpriſed at both theſe unexpected events. Being in the country I could not wait on Lord——to thank him for this great mark of his favour; but on my return I went immediately to pay my acknowledgments. His Lordſhip was in ſome confuſion, but replied, that he knew nothing of the matter: upon which I retired. It then ſtruck me that theſe commiſſions were owing to the generoſity of Miſs Benſon. I drove immediately to her houſe, and upon my beginning to thank her for this uncommon mark of her generoſity, ſhe ſtopped me haſtily with ſaying,

"Pray, Mr. Melvill, ſpeak no more of this matter—I am much more indebted to you and your good ſiſter for receiving me ſo hoſpitably, than your brother can poſſibly be to me for this trifle."

"Madam, ſuch unbounded generoſity confounds me—I——

"If the youth does not turn out very brave, I ſhall be very unlucky in my recommendation."

I was endeavouring further to expreſs my acknowledgments, but ſhe changed the converſation in a peremptory manner. Oh! Frederick, her manner of ſaying and doing every thing is enchanting;—it is the very reverſe of affectation.

* * * *

Friday,

Yeſterday a gentleman deſired to ſpeak with me,

me, and upon being ſhewn up, he enquired for Miſs Benſon; I told him, ſhe did not reſide at my houſe.

"(Nay replied he) it does not ſignify denying it. I have buſineſs of great conſequence to communicate to her, and I know very well ſhe lives with you."

"I deſire, ſir, to have no ſuch freedoms—What do you mean by denying it?—Do you give me the lye?"

"It matters not altercating. If, as I ſuppoſe, you are a particular friend of her's, it imports much that you bring me to her."

"Let me know your buſineſs, and I will take care and convey it to her."

"That will not do—where is ſhe?"

"Inform me from whence your came, and on what buſineſs?"

So now!—Is it not plain from your intereſting yourſelf ſo much in her buſineſs that ſhe lives with you?—She is now in the houſe, I ſuppoſe?"

"No ſuch matter, and I would in an inſtant inform you where ſhe was, had I not reaſon, from the ſtrangeneſs of your addreſs to ſuppoſe you meant no good."

"Meant no good! What do you mean, ſir?—I will only let you know that Miſs Benſon is in a moſt perilous ſituation, from which ſhe can only eſcape by drawing her purſe-ſtrings freely to me."

Looking upon him either as an impoſtor or the agent of a miſchief, I diſmiſſed him in a very abrupt manner; but as I liked not his behaviour, nor his errand, I went immediately to Pall-Mall, to adviſe Miſs Benſon of the adventure, and to ſee if ſhe approved of my conduct. Upon my relating to her the affair, ſhe laughed, and ſaid ſhe knew not what it could be, unleſs a trick of Sir George

Milbourn's in revenge for her disappointing him in the Sampher's.

"But (added she) I will go to Islington, and see whether they have had any reason to be alarmed." I offered my service to attend her, which she accepted. She rung for her coach, and we drove off thither. All was quiet and happy with that unfortunate mother and her daughter, and so the matter ended. I know not what to think of it—the stranger had the appearance of something about him that would give one the idea of his having real business, though such as could not be communicated. I shall, however, keep open this letter till I have fresh intelligence, that if any thing extraordinary should happen I may have an opportunity of inserting it.

Wednesday Morning.

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Frederick, I am half afraid that there is some mischief brooding. Miss Benson has received a citation at law, on the behalf of her brother, in Doctors Commons to prove and assign over the amount of all the legacies she received from Mr. Mellish. This is in consequence of a will, said to be found, of a later date than that under which she inherited. I consulted her upon her opinion respecting this affair; and, from what she says, I have not a doubt but this pretended will is all a forgery. I find she inherited more than thirty thousand pounds from Mr. Mellish, which, by the way, I remember she represented as only five; for what reason I know not. She says her brother has always cordially hated her—that she has no doubt of the same want of esteem from her father,

father, and that her old lover, Mr. Slingſby, ſhe ſuppoſes would come into any meaſure that could poſſibly flatter his avarice. In what manner they can have united their villainy ſo far as to combine in ſuch a plot as this, ſhe cannot comprehend; but it is certain that it muſt be as diabolical a piece of villainy as ever was heard of.

The ſtranger that called at my houſe, and had that remarkable converſation certainly had ſome knowledge of this affair. I now repent very much that I did not direct him to Miſs Benſon's; but it was impoſſible to judge otherwiſe at the time. I adviſed her immediately to conſult the beſt council in London, which ſhe determined to do immediately, and as ſecurity againſt the worſt evils to retain the moſt famous pleaders in her cauſe. She ſeems to hold the whole affair in great contempt, but I muſt own, I like not the appearance of ſuch adventures.

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Miſs Benſon is a little alarmed—from an accurate examination into the allegations of her adverſary, he ſeems to have fortified his out-works with ſuch a wall of witneſſes, that if they are hardened villains, as ſhe ſuppoſes them, matters may poſſibly run in an unfavourable channel. The trial will come on in three weeks. I tremble at the event of ſuch an attack, even in idea; for it implies at leaſt a hope of her antagoniſt that he may carry his point; and, from the ſeverity with which a forgery is puniſhed by our laws, that hope, one would think, cannot be ſlight, or they would never proceed to the poſſibility of a detection. This amiable woman, though frightened at her knowledge of this unnatural brother's temper, yet cannot be perſuaded that it is a caſe from which real danger

danger may flow. She ſeems too ſecure in her conſciouſneſs of the undoubted juſtice of her cauſe, and from the remembrance of the contempt which Mr. Melliſh always had for all her family. She knows that ſhe alone was the only perſon in it for whom he ever teſtified the leaſt eſteem. In a word, ſhe is clear that the whole is a vile forgery, and thinks that the truth can hardly fail of coming to light ſooner or later.

You may eaſily ſuppoſe that I intereſt myſelf not a little in this cauſe. I run perpetually to her lawyers, and take every meaſure with them to ſearch into and examine the pretences of her infernal brother.

Adieu——you ſhall hear again from me ſoon, if poſſible.

RICHARD MELVILL.

LETTER XVI.

Sir PHILIP EGERTON to Lord WILLIAM W—

I Have lately had a rencounter, to which I muſt deſire your Lordſhip to give attention; and that you may form an adequate idea of the affair, I ſhall give you a full detail of it.

Tueſday night, in a lounging humour, I went to a maſquerade which our club gave at Almack's; I was not in a diſpoſition for the impertinences which uſually diſguſt one at theſe meetings. I was only in a domino, that I might have the better opportunity of obſerving the folly of others, and be the leſs beſpattered by it myſelf. After a few turns I remarked a maſque prettily fancied, that aſſumed the character of Beatrice, ſhe attracted not my notice alone, for I obſerved a croud of Bene-

Benedicks in purſuit of her. There was a ſomething in her air, manner, and carriage, that were remarkably ſtriking; more grace and elegance could not be diſplayed under an aſſumed character. Her appearance, at a ſmall diſtance, made me ſollicitous to know if ſhe attracted her attendants merely by the fineneſs of her figure, or whether her wit could keep up a character, which ſeemed to have put Shakeſpear's to the ſtretch. I approached within hearing, and while ſhe was in full play upon three or four of her followers. I do not remember a ſcene, that ever pleaſed me more. Nothing could exceed the ſprightlineſs of her wit. A maſque in the character of Benedick, thought it incumbent on him to attack every Beatrice in the room; and, being a likely little fellow, he had made his part good with two or three of them; when, eſpying this ſtranger, he opened his trenches, but they were levelled in a moment. The figure of one was ridiculous; the dulneſs of another; the miſtakes of a third; the ignorance of a fourth; and with ſo ſuperior a ſtrain of humour, and ſuch flaſhes of wit, that none could be found that would have ſtood the encounter for a moment, had the ſhame been viſible in their countenance.

"Beatrice, (ſaid I) you over-act your part, you forget that Benedick alone is not only to appear —but Benedick the married man, and where's the he that will be Benedick of ſuch a termagant!"

"Oh, your ſex is ſo full of wit, that Benedicks will riſe up like muſhrooms."

"True; and exiſt as long; you cut them off with ſuch keen wit, you toſs them up with ſuch high flavoured ſauce that they ———"

"I find them moſt unpalatable morſels, but I ſuppoſe you, Signior ——"

"Aye to be ſure!—you have a mind to ſee what

what a ragoo you can make of my brains; but ſtop that mercileſs tongue;—the arbour ſcene is paſt; you mar your character, if you turn not out a moſt kind nymph."

"And you are the ſighing ſimpleton that wants to experience my kindneſs.—"

"Beatrice muſt at laſt give with one hand a kind jeſt, and with the other a ſtill kinder heart."

"Benedicks that deſerve a jeſt are eaſily found, but where's he that merits the heart of Beatrice?"

"Keep it yourſelf, Beatrice, but remember it is a periſhable commodity."

"Should I lay it by in Lavender to be brought out like a faded ribbon, and worn as a favour at the marriage of the antiquated Benedick! Truly it would then be good enough for him."

"I will have nothing to ſay to hearts, that are manufactured like a face. But here is a dance, Beatrice, if you have as much grace in your motion, as wit in your converſation, I proteſt you ſhall be my Beatrice."

"I accept the challenge, but ſhall never claim the reward."

She danced like an angel—to that uncommon degree of ſuperiority, as drew the eyes of the whole room; retiring preſently to a ſofa; where I was begining to compliment her on her dancing, when an awkward old woman approaching in a domino, and whiſpering ſomething to her in a mumbling voice, I juſt overheard "Indeed, Miſs Benſon, it is not;" I ſtarted at this ſound, which ſtruck me all-a-heap, "Zounds (thought I) if this ſhould be Lord William's Miſs Benſon!" I was juſt going bluntly to queſtion her, but fearing to miſs my aims if I was impetuous, I thought it would be the ſafer way, under the idea of its being her, to examine her as far as I could, and bring her off from

from the flippancy of her aſſumed character. "There goes a maſque, (ſaid I gravely) the very figure of a friend of mine I left two years ago at Florence."

She turning quickly to me, ſaid, "was you at Florence at that time, Sir?"

"Yes, Madam; one of the happieſt periods of my life was a pretty long reſidence I made in Italy; I ſtaid ſome time at Florence, where I contracted ſome friendſhips I ſhall adhere to through life."

"With ſome Italian Beatrice's I ſuppoſe; and you will remember them juſt as your ſex generally do. The Italian ladies deſerve better."

"No madam; my friendſhips were not ſo general, nor were they among the ladies only.—— But madam, were you ever acquainted with many Italians?"

"A few."

"Perhaps you have been in Italy?"

"I have."——(Lord William's Miſs Benſon by this light! exclaimed I to myſelf.)

"And at Florence?"

"Yes; I was at Florence ſome months."

"I proteſt this is the moſt agreeable intelligence in the world; I have an hundred old friends to talk of. Will you favour me with your name!"

"Beatrice, ſir, at your ſervice; I am not among your old friends; or you muſt have been very dull in recollecting them."

"Well madam, you will excuſe my freedom, but I remember a Mr. and Mrs. Jenkinſon at Florence, with whom I ſpent many happy hours; do you remember them?"

"Not the leaſt."

"There was alſo a Mr. Melliſh, one of the moſt ſenſible and accompliſhed men the age has produced.

produced." (This was touching a key which I thought would make her betray herſelf; and ſo I thought it did, for ſhe appeared agitated, ſhe however aſked,)

"Did you know Mr. Melliſh?"

"Yes, Madam; I knew him well; nor did I ever meet with a man from whoſe converſation I profited ſo much."

"heard much of that Mr. Melliſh; but I think, if I recollect right, he left Florence before I went there."

"He had alſo a niece with him who was, without exception, the moſt beautiful woman in Italy; if her eyes did not effect the conqueſt of the beholder, he could have no chance to eſcape her wit."

"A formidable lady truly!"

"Much more amiable than formidable; ſhe was the moſt ſingular woman I ever met with. A moſt ſtrange accident drove her from Florence, and whether Mr. Melliſh carried her I could never learn."

"Methinks you was not a very gallant admirer, to let her eſcape ſo eaſily. But what ſtrange accident could drive her from Florence in ſuch haſte?"

"Why, madam, the tale would have the appearance of a romance; I was no profeſſed admirer; but intereſted myſelf in the affair, on account of a particular and moſt valuable friend; a young nobleman (here ſhe began to flutter) then on his travels (yet more) who conceived ſo violent a paſſion for her (ſhe was now quite agitated, but I ſeeming to take no notice of it, went on) ſo fervent and ſincere a flame——"

"Sincere a flame (with much emphaſis)."

"Sincere a flame, Madam! what do you apprehend

prehend there is no ſincerity in love ?"

"Not much, ſir, I believe in the love of which you are ſpeaking; I heard ſomething obſcurely of ſuch an affair, but the lady I underſtand was very baſely treated."

"She thought ſo, madam, Mr. Melliſh thought ſo, and half Florence thought ſo; but it was all a deluſion, (here ſhe began again to flutter) perhaps we ſpeak of different gentlemen; the man I mean is Lord William W." (notwithſtanding all this preparation, the mentioning your name took away her breath; I could ſee ſhe was affected, and held a ſmelling bottle to her noſe.)

"It is the ſame I have heard of, ſir; but I believe it grows late;——" (getting up to retire.)

"No, madam; you muſt allow me to intreat you to let me explain this matter more fully: perhaps you may accidentally meet the lady, or hear of her among your acquaintance; it would be acting a humane part to undeceive ſo valuable a woman. Lord William W. ſince that unhappy affair, has not known peace or reſt. He is violently in love with her to this day; refuſes to engage in a match of great advantage, which the Duke his father has preſſed him to——leads a miſerable retired life, becauſe he can learn no tidings of Miſs Benſon."

"I muſt beg to be excuſed taking all you ſay literally; I heard enough of the affair to be convinced that Miſs Benſon was cruelly uſed; and doubtleſs ſuch a woman as you repreſent her, can never forgive inſults of that nature."

"Madam, I ſuſpect from your converſation that you are ſome intimate friend of the lady in queſtion. Will you be open and impartial enough to give me a meeting at any proper place, and I will lay before you a ſeries of letters, that have

paſſed between his Lordſhip and me, many of them of ſuch old dates and ſo regular and conſiſtent, that you ſhall not doubt his innocence."

"I confeſs, ſir, I am intereſted in the welfare of the lady you mention, and I can tell you a very eaſy method of ſeeing her, which is by calling any morning at 12 o'clock at her own houſe in Pall-Mall."

"I will undoubtedly be there to-morrow, in the mean time I take my leave."

The next day I was at Miſs Benſon's door punctually at twelve. By the way, my Lord, is it not extremely ſtrange, that ſhe ſhould have a houſe in ſo public a ſtreet of London, and conſequently muſt be known by many of her uncle's friends, and yet they never ſhould have heard any tidings of her? Upon enquiring of the ſervant, if Miſs Benſon was at home? and being anſwered in the affirmative, I was ſhewn up ſtairs. In the dining-room, which was the cabinet for the muſes, I found (without any exception) the moſt engaging beautiful woman I ever met with. Had I not known my friend's paſſion I had loſt my own heart in an inſtant. She received me with great politeneſs, mingled with a certain haughtineſs, like that of a Sovereign giving audience to the ambaſſador of a conquered Potentate.

"You doubtleſs know, madam, the buſineſs on which I am come to trouble you; a Lady laſt night at the ——"

"To undeceive you, ſir, and make your intelligence the clearer, I ſhall inform you that I am that Lady you had the converſation with laſt night."

"I am extremely glad to hear it, madam, for you will be the better able to examine me, relative to the declarations I then made you."

"In

"In the firſt place, ſir, you will favour me with your name."

"Sir Philip Egerton."

"I muſt beg leave to inform you, Sir Philip, that I think myſelf treated in the moſt ignominious manner by Lord William W. that unleſs you clear up, to my full ſatisfaction, the myſteries you mentioned laſt night, I ſhall conſider your preſent buſineſs not as a very honourable one."

"You muſt allow me, madam, to requeſt the particulars that gave the offence in the conduct of Lord William W. for they are, to the full as myſterious to him, as his conduct can be to you. And from what you mention I ſhall be the better able to ſatisfy you of the profs I have brought of the ſincerity of his profeſſions."

"Before I do that, ſir, or proceed any further in this affair, I muſt be informed of his Lordſhip's preſent ſituation, his ſentiments, &c."

"That I can give you in a few words, madam. Totally a ſtranger to the reaſon of your ſudden abſence from Florence, till he gathered ſome particulars which made him charge the miſchief to the machinations of an old enemy, he has never ceaſed to be the moſt miſerable of mankind. He fell ill of a violent fever at Florence, before he could follow you to Venice. That fever which reduced him to the brink of the grave, for twelve months, was totally owing to ſo cruel a diſappointment. It prevented him ever finding out where you had retired to. He continues to this hour an unhappy man, and merely on account of the loſs of you."

"How could this be the caſe, Sir Philip, when my uncle Mr. Melliſh not only ſent him a challenge, but purſued him, through half Italy?"

"So, madam, Lord William W. was informed.

But it was a moſt egregious miſtake. He never received a challenge, nor even an unkind word; and, at the very time in which Mr. Melliſh thought he was purſuing him, his Lordſhip was confined, between Rome and Florence, of wounds he received from aſſaſſins hired to deſtroy him by the ſame enemy."

"What bitter enemy could this be?"

"Why, Madam, it was a female of Milan, not of the beſt reputation, with whom Lord William W. had an affair more than a year before he ſaw you. He had viſited her under the idea of her being perfectly modeſt; it was never his character to connect himſelf with the vicious part of the ſex. Afterwards, finding he had been deceived, ſhe diſappointed, it may be ſuppoſed in golden hopes, perſecuted him with a moſt enterpriſing ſpirit of violent revenge. She hired aſſaſſins to kill him, at the ſame time that ſhe took effectual meaſures to break the connection between his Lordſhip and you. How ſhe effected that deſign he was never able to diſcover; but from what he could pick up at different times, he found that ſhe had procured a man to perſonate him, who fled from Mr. Melliſh after the pretended challenge. Several letters his Lordſhip wrote to Venice to you were, he ſuppoſed, delivered, but is not certain of that———."

"I never received any."

"She doubtleſs had her emiſſaries about you both, and took ſpecial care to deceive you equally.

"I never heard ſo villainous an affair; but ſtill, ſir, it remains very myſterious. I have doubts that hurt me not a little."

"Madam, this correſpondence, which has continued for ſome years, will clear up all your doubts. I have here arranged all his Lordſhip's letters

letters to me for three years paſt, including a period before he had the happineſs of being acquainted with you—here you will ſee his youthful flights, his follies, the ſecrets of his heart, laid open with the unreſerved freedom of private friendſhip. Believe me, madam, I would not truſt theſe letters to the eye of any other in the univerſe; and leaſt of all to yours, if I was not clear in the ſtate of his Lordſhip's heart.—Did I not know paſt all doubt, that you reign there with uncontrouled dominion, I ſhould never venture to take this ſtep. The letters are too numerous to be read at preſent; I will leave them with you madam, and wait on you to-morrow for them."

"I muſt confeſs, ſir, there is an ingenuouſneſs in this conduct, that much pleaſes me; and I ſhall peruſe the letters with ſatisfaction."

"I know from my friend's converſation, Miſs Benſon, that you are a lady of ideas much ſuperior to the punctilious conduct ſo common in the ſex. Will you permit me, on the behalf of his Lordſhip, to put a queſtion to you?"

"Frankly; I will."

"Is your heart as much diſengaged from other connections, as when Lord William W. was in your good opinion?"

"Upon my honour it is. Reſentment at the injurious treatment, I thought I had received from him, gave me an antipathy to the ſex, which has not for a moment been changed."

"I am ſatisfied, Madam."

"There was however one circumſtance in this affair, which I obſerved in your account of it, that diſpleaſed me greatly; the Duke is very deſirous of his ſon's marrying a Lady, whoſe great eſtate is—"

"That cannot be the ſmalleſt objection to you;

while his grace preſſed his Lordſhip upon that head, he had abſolutely deſpaired of meeting with you, and had no connection with any other Lady. The Duke knew not half the hiſtory of his acquaintance with you; only that he had a connection with an Engliſh Lady at Florence, in which he expreſly left him to his own direction; nor did he ever urge him to another match, till he underſtood the acquaintance with you was totally broke off. The Duke, as a moſt indulgent father, has more than once ſaid to me, that he ſhould be well contented, if Lord William W. would marry an amiable woman, had ſhe not a ſhilling; but he could not help being ſurpriſed at his refuſal of a moſt advantageous match with an unexceptionable woman, while he was unconnected with any other."

"The converſation laſting for ſome hours, Miſs Benſon was informed that dinner would be ready in a quarter of an hour, ſhe deſired my company, which I readily aſſented to; and, retiring to dreſs, left me with her books for entertainment.

It is with the utmoſt ſatisfaction I congratulate your Lordſhip upon my finding this moſt accompliſhed woman; truly ſhe is worthy of you. I think ſhe is extremely beautiful; but the turn and air of her perſon exceed, in my mind, the charms of all the faces in the world; but what is much the moſt ſtriking in her is, her converſation; which, upon the whole, much exceeds that of any perſon I have met with, male or female. Without any affectation, ſhe ſhews more good ſenſe than can well be conceived, with a variety, a knowledge, and a penetration, that independently of her wit, juſtifies you, my Lord, fully in my eyes, and would in your father's, was he to know her.

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In the afternoon Miſs Benſon communicated to me ſeveral particulars relative to their leaving Florence, which ſhewed, very plainly, that Zaffini was the authoreſs of all the miſchief that has happened. I will mention theſe to you, when I have more time, but at preſent I am in haſte to diſpatch this letter, as I am confident, the receipt of it will give more pleaſure, than any one you ever received from

Your Lordſhip's

Truly affectionate Friend,

PHIL. EGERTON.

LETTER XVII.

To the Same.

I Was in haſte, my Lord, to diſpatch my laſt, therefore did not wait to give you an account of a little plan I had formed to bring the Duke your father acquainted with Miſs Benſon. I was certain it would be a treat of the higheſt reliſh to let him know on what a woman you had placed your affections.

The day after I was with her I waited on him. The old man, who had not ſeen me for ſome weeks, accoſted me thus,

" Sir Philip, this wayward ſon of mine cannot ſettle two hours in a place; he wrote to me, not three weeks ago, that he ſhould ſtay at Paris three months, and laſt night I had another letter from him to let me know that he was juſt ſetting out for Montpelier, and is uncertain if he ſhall not go into Italy before the expiration of the year. Sir Philip, write to your friend, and tell him that the

the heir of a Dukedom and the repreſentative of an Engliſh county ſhould not ſpend all his time in France and Italy."

"I wiſh as well as your grace that he would come home and ſettle for life; but that cannot be till——"

"'Till he is married—youths of his quality ought to marry early—what in the name of wonder is of ſo much conſequence to the whole family as his having heirs to prevent the title being extinct. There is Lady Harriet——"

"Your ſon, my Lord, believe me, is one that will never marry at all if he does not chooſe for himſelf."

"I had rather he would chooſe for himſelf than force me to chooſe for him; but while he does not chooſe at all; ſurely he might hear plain reaſon. The honour of our family induces me to wiſh he would marry one of an inferior rank rather than not marry at all."

"Your grace cannot ſurely forget the affair he was engaged in at Florence.—

While his heart is fixed on the moſt accompliſhed woman of her age, of a moſt antient family; and inexpectation of a conſiderable fortune, what other engagement can you expect him to enter into?"

"That affair is no longer an objection. Such a match would have made me truly happy, though, by the way, Sir Philip, he gave ſuch an hyperbolical deſcription of that ſame lady, that I put no great faith in the likeneſs of the picture. But ſhe is loſt, gone, or dead, and at preſent totally out of the queſtion."

"I am now come to give your grace ſome information relative to that affair. His lordſhip continues a moſt miſerable being to this day, on account of that lady, and it is now ſo long ſince he

he heard of her that I believe he is in deſpair; but be aſſured, ſhe has made ſuch an impreſſion on his heart that he will never connect himſelf with any other.—But, my Lord, Miſs Benſon is now in London—I have found her out."

"Give me your hand, my dear Sir Philip, you overjoy me with the news."

I then entered into a minute detail of the maſquerade, and the meeting at Miſs Benſon's; aſſuring him, that ſhe was all his ſon had ever deſcribed. (The old Duke was in a tranſport of joy—he interrupted me every moment, with a thouſand enquiries)—and when I had done, he ſaid, "Sir Philip, you ſhall carry me this minute to the Lady——I will immediately make propoſals to her.

"My Lord, I came with that deſign, that you might be a witneſs of your ſon's taſte. But there would be too much reſerve perhaps in the viſit, if ſhe knew you. I will call on her and introduce you as a friend of mine, who is deſirous of her converſation. As you are not a young fellow, there is nothing odd in it. But you muſt dreſs without the ſtar and garter, I will call on you my Lord to-morrow morning."

"No by G—— Sir Philip; this moment."

Saying this he changed his coat, and walked away with me to Pall Mall. Miſs Benſon was luckily at home: I introduced my friend Mr. Bembridge, as one who was deſirous of being acquainted with a lady, of whoſe uncommon accompliſhments he had heard ſo much. She was leſs reſerved than I expected, and I thought I ſaw her mind admirably tuned for the day, by the peruſal of your Lordſhip's letters. She ſupported the converſation with ſuch a ſolidity, but, with an eaſe, as appeared perfectly engaging. She

ſeaſoned

ſeaſoned it with a thouſand good humoured ſallies of wit and fancy. The Duke diſputed with her on the merits of the Italian poets. She defended the cauſe of Taſſo againſt the ſuperiority of Dante or Arioſto. She entered into a complete criticiſm on Taſſo's imitation of Virgil. From literature we paſſed to the preſent ſtate of the countries through which ſhe had travelled. She made many pertinent and original remarks on the characters of the different nations of Europe; and ſeemed rather inclined to compliment the French with underſtanding life the beſt. The Duke diſputed the point, and produced a lively altercation, much, I could ſee, to his ſatisfaction.

"But whatever ſuperiority (ſaid the Duke) is allowed to the French in the art of paſſing life agreeably; I think, upon the whole, madam, the preference is due to our own country. Here only we find real liberty, and thoſe bold and generous ſentiments which are moſt worthy of mankind."

"I cannot compliment this country ſo much, Sir. You have, it is true, more of that fierce boldneſs, and capricious freedom in all the purſuits of life, than is found in any other nation. Liberty cannot be enjoyed without producing brave and generous ſentiments, but you will, in no country in Europe, find more numerous inſtances of weakneſs and even meanneſs. That liberty which gives energy to every noble ſpirit, gives alſo the reins to every pitiful one: both follow their inclinations, without controul; and produce that aſtoniſhing medley, the Britiſh nation. In which, I think, there is to the full, as much to blame as to commend. And is it not a very unworthy idea of the diſpenſations of Providence, to ſuppoſe, that every thing great and good is ſhut up in this little iſle? I think I have obſerved the French,

French, Italians, Germans and Dutch with attention, and I think each of them have peculiar advantages in which they are unrivalled by the others."

The Duke liſtened to all ſhe ſaid with the moſt eager attention. He changed the converſation with rapidity, that he might hear her ſentiments on as many ſubjects as poſſible. Among others he introduced the conduct of human life, and the purſuit of happineſs. He could not have touched a key which would have ſounded more muſic from Miſs Benſon. She ridiculed the purſuits of life with a moſt manly and expreſſive urbanity: laughed at the idea of happineſs flowing from a gratification of the paſſions; from the exertions of wealth, or the purſuits of ambition; but obſerved that the neareſt ſtate to it was, "a certain mediocrity of life paſſed in eaſe and indulgence, equally diſtant from ambition and voluptuouſneſs. The genuine epicurian philoſophy was, ſhe thought, beſt adapted to a tranquil life; but the more modern doctrines which were grafted on that ſtock was utterly inconſiſtent with it. But, ſaid ſhe, the luxury and devouring profuſion of this age, render all pleaſures of life abortive, and undermine every ſyſtem, that in idea promiſes happineſs. Extravagance is the vice of every refined nation, and draws with it a train of conſequences, which include the whole catalogue of vice and folly. I know not if a decent and well regulated œconomy is not, at preſent, the ſummum bonum of human life."

I obſerved your father was ſo agitated with his approbation of Miſs Benſon's ideas, which ſhe offered in the moſt unaffected, modeſt manner, that cannot be conceived; that I was fearful he would every inſtant diſcover himſelf. To avoid which,

which, I begged the favour of her gratifying us with her performance on the harpſicord. She readily complied, and enchanted the old man, who, you know, is extremely fond of muſic. She ſung and played near an hour a variety of your father's favourite airs, with ſo much taſte and expreſſion, that he could ſcarcely believe his own ears. He was eaſily perſuaded to ſtay to dinner. Miſs Benſon keeps a plain table, but it ſhews the elegance of her taſte. Every thing excellent of the ſort; nothing expenſive. The converſation was lively, but inſtructive. Mr. Bembridge expreſſed his wonder at finding a young lady of her beauty, wit, accompliſhments and fortune, living ſingle, when ſo excellently qualified for rendering a worthy man happy. You certainly judge very wrong, (replied ſhe) I am eaſy and contented at preſent; but how do I know what my huſband would be? Beſides, I have certainly contracted ſilly habits from being my own miſtreſs, which would but ill accord with the ruling ſway of your ſex. If I preſerve my preſent reſolution I never ſhall marry."

"You muſt not keep it, by heaven, Madam, or you will make my ſon the moſt miſerable of mortals!"

"Your ſon!"

"It is impoſſible longer to conceal myſelf. You ſee, madam, the father of the man, who is the moſt unhappy in the world,—of Lord William W———, who has never taſted pleaſure ſince he loſt you."

"Upon my word, Sir, I ſcarcely know what anſwer to make your Grace:—this keeping yourſelf concealed is—is—

"Lovely Miſs Benſon! I concealed myſelf in order to be fully convinced of the truth of my friend,

friend, Sir Philip Egerton's report,—and of the deſcriptions my ſon had given me. Allow me, madam, to aſſure you, that I am at this inſtant the happieſt of mankind:—I now ſee my ſon's good ſenſe—his taſte and feeling—I thank heaven! he has fixed his affections on a woman worthy of the firſt nobleman in the land."

"I know not what——my Lord——Your Grace muſt excuſe——(in ſome confuſion.)

"But, Miſs Benſon, is my ſon happy?—Allow an old man's impertinence to enquire. Have you been fully undeceived with reſpect to that vile miſtake which traduced him in your opinion? Has he regained any ſhare in your heart? Suffer the inquietude of a father, anxious for the happineſs of a worthy child.—Be ingenuous—tell me, Miſs Benſon, what has my lord to expect? You are the arbitreſs of his fate—of the fate of our family."

"Your Lordſhip overwhelms me with confuſion. I know not what to anſwer; but believe me, my Lord, I have the higheſt eſteem for your ſon, and am convinced that he was cruelly traduced."

"Thank heaven for this joyful hour! I have diſpatched an expreſs to him in the South of France, and am certain he will fly to England on the wings of youthful love. Never could he have ſought an alliance that would have been half ſo agreeable. You muſt allow me, Madam, to pay my devoirs to you as often as you will admit an old man's intruſion. I conſider you as my daughter, as a daughter that will do me honour."

I never ſaw your father in ſuch extacies. The tears flowed plentifully down the cheeks of the amiable Julia; it was indeed a moving ſcene: would to heaven you could have been a witneſs of

it. The Duke, unable to expreſs what he felt, left the houſe abruptly, and, taking me with him, returned home; nor would he part with me, but talked over the ſcene with ſuch enjoyment, as ſhewed how complete his ſatisfaction is. He is in raptures with Miſs Benſon; ſays ſhe has more underſtanding than half the men he ever converſed with. "Can you, (ſaid he) have a ſtronger inſtance of her incomparable ſenſe, than her poſſeſſing ſo much learning without the tincture of affectation? I ſhall not have any peace till Lord William W—— returns and makes me, as well as himſelf, happy by marrying her.

I would not delay giving you theſe particulars, which will meet you at Paris in your return; and I hope you will make all the expedition that is poſſible.

Adieu.

Your ſincere Friend,

PHILIP EGERTON.

LETTER XVIII.

Mr. MELVILL to Mr. FREDERICK.

YOU may remember, Frederick, that I mentioned a ſtrange rencounter I had with a ſtrange fellow, who came after Miſs Benſon, and that I predicted miſchief. I was but too true a prophet, for miſchief with a vengeance has happened to the moſt amiable of her ſex.

She has loſt her trial, and with it much more than all her fortune, for her brother has laid his damages, by her poſſeſſion at eight thouſand pounds, which they aſſerted ſhe had ſquandered away. This with many other demands coming

on

on her at the moment she had lost her all, has left her entirely in their power, and the use the beast her brother made of it was to throw her immediately into prison. It was by accident that I heard of these particulars. I fully proposed being present at the trial, but was suddenly called out of town. When I called at Miss Benson's in Pall-mall, the door was opened by an old woman whom I had never seen before. I enquired if Miss Benson was at home? "This house, replied the old hag, does not belong to her any longer, she is in prison for more than she can pay."

Judge, my dear Frederick, of the agonies I felt at this thunderbolt of intelligence: Her situation was so truly pathetic, had she been even a stranger, that one must have felt it severely, much more when it befel the idol of my soul. To be hurried from a state of ease and affluence, from a life of the utmost elegance, to a dungeon, stripped of every penny, and in the power of others, by a debt of no less than eight thousand pounds, was altogether so pitiable a case that it filled me with horror.

I hastened to her solicitor to know the truth. He told me that "her brother had carried his cause with a perfect eclat; by such a crowd of witnesses, that there could not be a shadow of doubt concerning the validity of the will under which he claimed, and, in a word, that Miss Benson had no hope left." He had humanity enough to execrate the wretch for not being contented with what he got, without imprisoning an only sister for what it was impossible she should ever pay. I flew immediately to the hateful place that immured the brightest jewel in the creation. The jailor would not introduce me to her; he had her express orders, and was bribed (I will answer for

it, to obey them) not, on any pretence, to introduce a creature to her. I offered a guinea, then three, and then five. But he was inexorable. I then threatened him moſt bitterly. Thundered in his ears the illegality of his refuſal, and ſwore by G— that I would immediately proſecute him. The fellow perſiſting in his refuſal brought me a little to my recollection. I thought ſhe muſt certainly have given theſe inſtructions to the jailor to keep her from the eyes of inquiſitive people, whoſe preſence would only inſult, but could not relieve her. What ſhould I ſee her for unleſs I could adminiſter comfort? Zounds, what did I come here for without it?

I left the priſon door, and returning to her ſolicitor, deſired the addreſs of her brother's lawyer, determining to pay the eight thouſand pounds, the moment I could convert part of my Berkſhire eſtate into money; or mortgage it for the amount directly. With this reſolution I found him out, and informing him that I would become immediate ſecurity for Miſs Benſon's debt, he replied, but in a ſurly manner, as if he was not well pleaſed, "that it was paid." Aſtoniſhed at this, I deſired to know by whom? he replied, "by a Sir Philip Egerton."

This news gave me a freſh wound. Who is this Sir Philip Egerton? ſaid I to myſelf. How long has he known her? He muſt certainly have been upon terms of great intimacy, or elſe much in love with her, or he would never pay ſo conſiderable a ſum: he doubtleſs has ſeen her, and before now carried her in triumph from her priſon. Whither will he carry her? To his own houſe to be ſure. He will become her friend, her protector, her——— Oh! the devil! that it ſhould come to this!—I was diſtracted.

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In this moſt cutting diſappointment I returned home to conſider of what meaſures I ſhould take, and ſpent a reſtleſs night without fixing on any plan that I approved of. Next day I returned again to the priſon; the jailor informed me, ſhe went away laſt night, "With whom;"——

"With a gentleman in his chariot."——

Curſe the gentleman, thought I.

"For my part (added the fellow) I never met with ſuch a ſtrange woman in my life.——She was as eager to ſtay in a priſon as ever any other perſon was to get out of one. He came twice, but I refuſed him, by her order; he then brought a warrant for my ſhewing him to her.—She would not go,—poſitively, not ſhe;—and then he went away, and brought another warrant, with which he removed her body from my cuſtody."

This was a ſtrange account, which I could not underſtand.—I aſked him if he knew who he was, and whither he was gone?" He replied, No. I haſtened again to Pall-Mall, thinking it might be poſſible to gain ſome intelligence of her at her own houſe. When I came there, the door was opened by her footman; I enquired haſtily for his miſtreſs, and putting ſeveral queſtions to him in a breath, found that ſhe came home laſt night, but was gone out this morning, and was expected at home to dinner. Her being taken out of priſon by a gentleman, and now finding ſhe was at her own houſe again, appeared very ſtrange and myſterious. I know not what to underſtand by it, Frederick, and ſhall be on the rack till I find out the real ſtate of this complicated caſe.

Adieu; I will write again as ſoon as I gain any further information. Your's,

RICHARD MELVILL.

LETTER XIX.

Miss BENSON, to Miss EMILIA WATSON.

Canefield, Herts.

MY dear Emilia, I have an history to write you, which will move your pity in favour of your friend: a most strange revolution has happened in my fortune, on which I cannot reflect without the greatest astonishment.

The reason I have not been so punctual lately in answering your letters, was owing to my being engaged in a law-suit with my brother, for no less than the whole of the fortune I received from Mr. Mellish, charged at more than eight thousand pounds above the real amount. This claim of my brother's is founded on a pretended will of a later date, than that under which I inherited. Now, my dear Emilia, there could not have been produced any writing, which I should be so extremly clear was a forgery, as such a will. All who knew my uncle, knew him to be a man incapable of so base an action, as that of bringing me up in expectation of an handsome fortune, and then leaving me absolutely destitute. And in favour of whom? Why of a man he always despised and treated with as much contempt, as ever proceeded from his amiable temper. I am confident this will is all a vile forgery.

My brother made good his claim, established by the testimony of several witnesses, the credibility of the will he had produced, so that by the verdict he gained, he stripped me of every thing, and left me his debtor for more than eight thousand pounds. As I was unable to pay such, or indeed any sum, he went further and threw me into prison.

I was not surprized at this stroke at all, as I was clear

clear that his ſucceſs was founded on a moſt infamous villainy. I ſhould have ſuppoſed, that he would let no opportunity eſcape of driving me to deſpair, which he doubtleſs hoped would put an end to my days—till then, I do not apprehend he looks for any full ſecurity in a poſſeſſion, which he has acquired by injuſtice.

You may eaſily imagine, my dear Emilia, what were my feelings at finding myſelf moved from my own houſe, in which I enjoyed myſelf in no illiberal manner, to a priſon. I was full of reflection—and in the moſt irreſolute, undetermined ſtate of mind, I ever thought it was poſſible I could experience. My future proſpect of life was at once clouded with an impenetrable gloom. The priſon was at once ſtripped of its horrors, when I reflected that I could not leave it, but to lead a dependent life, the ſport of thoſe I hated, or a burthen to them I loved. The priſon was a ſtate of happineſs, compared with that refinement of miſery felt by ſo many, who ſeem to be at liberty. I meditated as deeply on my fate, and with as clear a mind as my ſituation would allow, and what was the event of my ideas I have forgotten. But I indulged, with ſome little horror, the thought of putting a period at once to my miſery, and my life.

Suicide may be condemned by divines, but it appears not to me to be at all inconſiſtent with the principles of ſound philoſophy. A perſon, it is ſaid, has no power over their own life. This is the language of ſophiſtry. Pray what power have they over the lives of criminals? or what is the power of one army over another, they are going to ſlaughter? Force alone is power; but the legality of uſing that force, is much clearer in a woman's putting a period to her own miſerable exiſtence,

exiſtence, than in mankind, who by the violent, the refined ſyſtems of wars and laws, cut the throats of one another. It is idle to raiſe objections againſt an act, which are equally ſtrong againſt a thouſand others that are common and allowed of.

I was apprehenſive of being enquired for at the priſon. From my laſt letter, my dear Emilia, you underſtood the uncommon viſit I had received from the Duke of———, with the converſations that had paſſed with Sir Philip Egerton;—from the general turn of that converſation, it appeared very evidently to me, that I might receive viſits, which I ſhould deteſt. I muſt own to you, my friend, that I am infinitely jealous of Lord William W.——, his connections—his friends. When I was acquainted with him at Florence, I knew them all; but what adventures may have happened ſince!—what changes!—I no longer reflect with any pleaſure on a reconciliation with him, even when I was poſſeſſed of my fortune, and made the appearance of a perſon above dependance; but at preſent I renounce the connection, I am determined never more to allow its being mentioned to me. I am too proud, after having loſt all that in the eyes of the world rendered me reſpectable—deeply in debt—in priſon—in ſuch a ſituation to bear the humiliating pity of thoſe that know that affair—it is what I could not bear.

Full of this idea, I determined to prevail on the goaler to deny every body admittance to me. I told him, that it was poſſible, ſome perſons of faſhionable appearance might call on me—but on no account to allow any one admiſſion; and as a means of enſuring his obedience, I promiſed him five guineas in a month, if he would be punctual.

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One day, he came to inform me, that a gentleman in a chariot was extremely importunate to ſee me; and ſoon after another in a chariot on the ſame errand; that he was again returned with the Lord Chief Juſtice's permiſſion to ſee me—ſaying theſe words, he introduced Sir Philip Egerton.

"Miſs Benſon, ſurely it is very ſtrange, that you ſhould take ſuch pains to remain concealed and hidden from every one. Can you imagine, madam, that any perſon, who had had the honour of your acquaintace in Pall-Mall, would not be proud of it here?"

"I know not that, Sir, but I aſſure you I am too proud to give it them here."

"I underſtand you, Madam; becauſe you have met with cruel misfortunes, you inſiſt upon ſuppoſing other people as inſenſible as you are unhappy."

"Upon what account, Sir, is it that you trouble me here? I deſire to know it at once, that you may retire and leave me to myſelf."

"My buſineſs, Miſs Benſon, is only to inform you, that the Duke of ——— has paid your brother all his demand, has purchaſed your leaſe, furniture, &c. and they only wait your ſhewing yourſelf to take poſſeſſion."

"Then I am the moſt miſerable woman breathing!

"Good God, madam! what can you mean?"

"I mean, Sir, that I eſteem and venerate the generoſity of a man, to whom I can make no return; and for that reaſon, am determined never to accept it."

"Lord William W———, madam, would—."

"Name him not, Sir; and believe the fixed reſolution of one, whom no misfortune can ever

drive

drive from it; I never will see his Lordship—he knew me in prosperity—he shall not descend to take me from a goal."

"This, madam, is by no means a proper place to altercate these affairs; but if you will please to attend me, I promise you, you shall find yourself as perfectly independent as ever."

I positively refused to stir, to his no small astonishment; but finding by my manner, that I was resolute, he left me, and returned again soon after with a warrant from the Lord Chief Justice, to remove me from prison. He insisted on using his power, he said, and I was forced, by the goaler's language, who wanted, I believe, to get rid of me, to accompany him in his chariot—he drove to Pall Mall; shewed me my late house, the servants there, and every circumstance as I left it. It was a stroke that made me admire the Duke's generosity; but my heart was too full of grief and pride—honest pride I must call it—to allow me a moment's repose or satisfaction.

Sir Philip presently left me, finding that all conversation was in vain.

This action of the Duke's gives me a very great opinion of his sincerity and his generosity; but it only makes me the more miserable to think, that it is no longer possible for me to dream of a connection that would wound me in the tenderest manner. Besides, what do I know of Lord William W——? It is some years since I saw him. He has, doubtless, seen women more deserving than I, or at least more agreeable. A passion that is so long without hope of satisfaction, presently dies with the men. I know not his connections. I have no authority but a few letters.—Fool that I have been!—But the Duke is in every thing complete. I found in the toilet boxes five bank notes,

each

each of one hundred pounds; I returned them to their place, and determined not only to quit the houſe the firſt opportunity, but alſo to retire from the world to ſome unknown ſpot, where I might at leiſure, reflect on my hard fate, and take a reſolution, either to live in obſcurity, or not to live at all.

On being hurried away to priſon, I had the precaution of dreſſing myſelf in the plaineſt morning dreſs I had, and of taking in my pocket ſeventy guineas, which I had then in the houſe; I propoſed, in the ſame manner, to take a voluntary leave of my houſe, determining to go into the country, to ſome diſtance from London.

In the night, inſtead of ſleep, I had twenty waking dreams concerning my future conduct, but none that pleaſed me.—I tell you this, my dear Emilia, with the utmoſt freedom; and I know you will at once exclaim, "My dear Julia, why would you not immediately come down to your faithful friend Emilia!" I know this will be your ſentiment; but the ſtubbornneſs of my heart will not allow me to be a dependant beggar any where. I have not a proſpect of better times.—My father has been ſo ſet againſt me by my brother, that I do not expect a ſhilling from him, even at his death;—how therefore can I make one of thoſe impudent viſits of diſtreſs for a month, in pretence of ſtaying ten years! No, my Emilia, let me prevent your humanity and friendſhip making any offers, which I am predetermined to refuſe.

Sometimes I thought of an obſcure lodging in London, and to try to maintain myſelf by fine work,—but the fear of being diſcovered, and the inſults to which all women of that ſtile, who are not either old or ugly, are expoſed, determined me againſt it. Getting a place as a lady's maid, would

would be a moſt eligible plan, if I could procure a good ſervice; but I ſhould, at a diſtance from London, be utterly ignorant how to get a good one; for as to character, I can have none; and ſhall appear every where more of a run-away vagrant than any thing elſe. It once came into my head to diſguiſe myſelf like a man, go down into Suſſex, hire myſelf to ſome of our family, and ſee if chance would not give me an opportunity of diſcovering, in ſome inadvertent hour of my maſter's, ſome traces of the villainy that deprived me of my fortune. This ſcheme pleaſed me moſt; but the difficulty of executing it was almoſt inſuperable.

I fixed upon nothing, but determined to get an obſcure lodging, at ſome diſtance from London, for a week or two, for leiſure to reflect on what was beſt to be done. On ſecond thoughts, I conceived that I ſhould be more private within fifteen or twenty-five miles of London, than at a greater diſtance; becauſe ſtrangers of a particular caſt are ſtared at by a whole village, either from envy at their finery, or fear of being burthened with freſh paupers, from their poverty.

I aroſe rather earlier than common, eat my breakfaſt, and made up a ſmall parcel of linen and neceſſaries in a ſmall trunk, in which I alſo depoſited part of ſixty guineas I had left; and the reſt for fear of accident in my pocket. I ſent the footman up to Portman-ſquare; and one of the maids another way, that I might get off quite unperceived; and taking my opportunity, I beckoned to a chairman to come and take my trunk; and then marched off, ordering him to follow me. I went up to Soho-ſquare; and there, to be ſecure of not being followed, I made the chairman ſet down the trunk by the iron rails, I ſet myſelf on

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it, and paid him off, ſaying I ſhould wait there till I was called for; when he was out of ſight I called a coach, and told the coachman to drive towards Hampſtead, till I ſtopped him. We had ſcarcely got off the ſtones before I ſaw a ſtage-coach; I then ſtopped the hack, enquiring if they had room, and being anſwered in the affirmative, took a place, without ever enquiring where they were going to.

I had only one fellow-traveller; who had the appearance of a plain honeſt farmer, I made many enquiries of him, about the country, about lodging and boarding, prices, &c. and the old man in return aſked me ſeveral queſtions, which I anſwered as it beſt ſuited my purpoſe. After a pauſe he ſaid to me, "Mayhap you want to lodge and board in the country."

"Yes, I replied, if I could find a very retired houſe in the country, with a ſmall family, I ſhould like it very well."

"But mayhap you want to be very near London."——

"No, anſwered I, I had rather not be very near London."

"Should you like a farmer's houſe to board in?"——

"Yes; returned I, very well."

"Why, ſaid he, my dame would like to take a boarder."

"Where do you live?"

"At Canefield, near Watford."

"Shall we go near your houſe?"——

"Not very near it; but my man is to meet me to take two baſkets, and if you could walk three miles you might go ſee how you liked it."

I embraced, with readineſs, the offer. The farmer's man took my trunk, and he and his ma-

ſter the baſkets; and ſo we trudged the three miles through a very pleaſant and retired country. On our arrival at the farm-houſe, which I was pleaſed to find in a lonely rural pleaſant ſituation; he introduced me to his dame, telling her the motive of his bringing the lady. The woman's good-natured, open countenance, prejudiced me in her favour. I deſired to ſee the room they could furniſh me with, and was ſhewn into the beſt bed-chamber, a neat clean room, much better furniſhed than I expected. I liked it very well. Next we came to the terms of boarding, waſhing, and lodging, by the week or month.

They conſulted together, while I took a walk in a pretty garden, under the windows of the chamber I had ſeen, and preſently coming to me, ſaid they could not afford it under two guineas and a half a month; I acquieſced at once in the terms, and took poſſeſſion of my lodging.

After ſuch a rapid ſucceſſion of miſery, it was ſome comfort to be able to board in ſilence over my ill fate, and meditate on future ills. I am extremely fortunate in this retreat. We are three miles from Watford, which is the neareſt town; this houſe ſtands quite alone in the middle of a woodland country, and in the center of a farm of near four hundred acres. The country is very retired; ſcarce an houſe to be ſeen; my room is of a middling ſize, airy and pleaſant, I look over a part of the farm, to a large wood—under the banks of which there is a trout ſtream a few breaks of which I ſee from my windows. It is, upon the whole, rural and pretty. I am quite in the back part of the houſe; out of the way of all ſervants, labourers or ploughmen—ſo that it is a perfect retirement; in a word, identically what I ſhould have wiſhed for.

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I breakfaſt in my own room at nine; at one I dine with the family; that is, the farmer, his wife, two ſons and a daughter; all as decent people as can be; very civil and attentive. At ſix I drink tea by myſelf, and at eight we ſup. I go under the name of Mrs. Pigot, a married woman, my huſband gone to the Eaſt-Indies. I have much converſation with the farmer upon his huſbandry, the culture of his lands, his crops, manuring, &c. and I talk with his wife concerning the matters of the dairy, and the management of cows. If I was to be here a twelvemonth, I ſhould make as good a farmer as moſt I believe in this pariſh—I have had ſeveral walks about the farm, which is very pleaſantly ſpread over two hills. The farmer thinks me very intelligent, and is ſurpriſed to find, after a little chat, that I have made ſo much advantage of his information as to be able to puzzle him. I have been here but five days, and poſſeſs the good-will of the whole family—they ſeemed pleaſed with me, and I am perfectly ſatisfied with them. I had the precaution to bring with me a ſmall edition of Horace, Homer, and Taſſo, which are all the books I hawe got with me, and alleviate my aching mind ſometimes. A little reading, much walking, and ſome work, are my employments; but the ſevereſt taſk, my Emilia, is the buſineſs of thinking. Reflection is death to all repoſe. I can fix on no plan. I can find comfort in no idea; what I am to do I know not. Could my preſent retirement laſt, I believe I could ſubmit to it with more than eaſe; even with chearfulneſs and pleaſure;—but the idea of its ending, and the beginning of poverty, is painful; and as to ever becoming a burthen on others it is what I have a fixed reſolution to periſh rather than ſubmit to.

One favourable circumſtance, however, I ſhall mention. While I was in proſperity, I could never root out the remainder of that ſtrong affection I had for Lord William W——, even while I thought him the moſt worthleſs of mankind, I could not totally ſmother what I eſteemed an unworthy paſſion; and when, my dear Emilia, I was convinced of his innocence, it only re-kindled the paſſion, and made me rejoice, too ſoon, to find that I had been deceived; for I never had any proof of his preſent ſentiments towards me. Upon reflection, therefore, I cannot but ſeverely condemn myſelf, for liſtening to the converſations of Sir Philip and the Duke. Now, however, I know how to act with propriety; I cannot bear even the moſt diſtant idea of an alliance with a nobleman, while I myſelf am a dependant beggar; eſpecially with that man, with whom I was once nearly on terms of equality.

Good God! Emilia, what a change is there from my ſituation in Mr. Melliſh's life, to the preſent miſerable ſtate I am in! Travelling through the courts of Europe, with a gay and brilliant train; courted and careſſed by all; and refuſing even the hand of a ſovereign Prince; living in the profuſion of all the elegancies of life; and ſollicitous alone for paſſing the time agreeably—but I feel in myſelf philoſophy enough to ſupport the change. In this humble retirement I do not regret the living in the ſtile of ſix thouſand pounds a year; becauſe even then my heart was reſtleſs—but the idea of dependency hurts me. At preſent I am actually happy in every thing that concerns my ſituation, and have no evil to complain of while it laſts.

Adieu, my dear friend! Direct to Mrs. Pigot, at Mr. Clevely's, Canefield, near Watford.

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LETTER XX.

Miss Watson to Miss Benson.

YOU muſt always have remembered, my dear Julia, that I eſteemed your judgment not as an opinion, which ſhould be canvaſſed, but as an oracle which ſhould be ſubmitted to. Be aſſured, therefore, that any affair, in which I differ totally from you, muſt have ſome ſtrange peculiarities, not eaſily to be accounted for. I am amazed at your ſentiments, or rather at your extravagance to which you carry them. I am no enemy to your ideas of independency; but they are general ideas, and not at all applicable to this caſe. Your pride might prevent you, poſſibly, with juſtice from living in your houſe, after it muſt be by the favour of another; but, when you are in a retirement, that you ſhould chooſe to be unhappy, leſt you ſhould be driven by poverty to ſuicide, when you have contracted your expences to thirty or forty pounds a year, is ridiculous, to the higheſt degree. Acording to this fine ſyſtem, you can live a year and an half, which, my dear Julia, is time enough for conſideration of the future. But, now, pray tell me, if you think the ſpirit of independency ſhould have prevented your fixing in juſt ſuch a farm-houſe in my neighbourhood? You have always profeſſed a value for my friendſhip. Now you have no creature to converſe with except a farmer and his family,—ſurely my company now and then would have been agreeable: and as to poverty at the end of an year and an half, really I think you might accept of forty guineas a year from your friend Emilia, without any wound to that high ſpirit, which actuates all your actions. My income of

two hundred pounds a year, which my induſtry increaſes an hundred ways, is abſolutely more than I know what to do with. As a proof of which, let me aſſure you, I have now in bank one hundred and ſixty pounds, not one ſhilling of which I ſhall ſpend before next quarter-day. Taking money from me is taking it from one that knows not what to do with it. And your having it would make me far more happy, than any other way of ſpending it whatever. But obſerve well what I am going to ſay: You need not write to me to diſſuade me, for I am abſolutely determined. Upon my eſtate, the rents of which my father receives and pays me the nett amount, which as I ſaid before, is two hundred pounds a year, there is now a pretty little farm vacant. It contains only thirty acres of land, and moſt of it graſs; the houſe is ſmall, but very pretty, and moſt ſweetly ſituated on the banks of a little river, that runs like your trout ſtream. Under a wood, behind the houſe, are the incloſures, which ſpread on the ſide of a gentle hill. It is a delicious retirement. I will put the houſe in repair, get you ſome cows and a pig, and you ſhall be my tenant for the farm. You may afford a maid out of the profits of the dairy, pay your rent and be obliged to nobody. Then I ſhall ſee if you have learned any thing from farmer Clevely. The ploughed land will make ſome variety in your management, and be an amuſement. You need not keep any men, as the neighbouring farmers will be glad to plough for you for hire, which will be better. Here you may be, Mrs. Pigot, as well as at Canefield, ſee nobody, but thoſe you like,—admit me as ſeldom as you pleaſe, and if you will make uſe of your philoſophy, conſider it as that retirement, which your favourite Horace wiſhed for in vain. It

will

will be ſome time before it is ready for your reception, but I will give you a line when you ſhould ſet out. But, once more, remember that it will be in vain to reply in your heroical ſtile, and refuſe this mark of my friendſhip, but not of my bounty. I ſhall get every thing ready, whither you take or refuſe the offer. But, my dear Julia, do you treat me in the ſame ſtile as Sir Philip, the Duke, and I know not who? Have you no regard for my friendſhip? Would you do nothing to make me happy? I will no longer ſuppoſe you can be ſo inconſiderate, and ſo unfriendly.

As to the wretch your brother, I am as fully perſuaded the whole affair is a forgery as you can be: from the whole tenour of your letters, while Mr. Melliſh was living, I am confident he would have left his fortune to Satan as ſoon as your brother; but, my deareſt, I am alſo confident that this villainy will come out, and you be re-inſtated in your fortune again: the number of witneſſes your brother had collected, appears to me a favourable circumſtance; depend upon it ſome of them will turn out villains to their truſt as well as to you, and betray the whole. At leaſt, I think, it is highly probable; nor ſhould you, on any account, deſpair, for ſuch changes and turns are by no means more ſurprizing, than what you have experienced already. Your ſcheme of turning man and going down to Suſſex to reconnoitre and pick up intelligence, I do not think a bad one, provided you did it in the character of a gentleman, and not a footman, which would expoſe you very frequently to be diſcovered. But if you got acquainted at your father's, you certainly would have a chance of making ſome diſcoveries. In caſe you ſhould be of the ſame opinion, and

make

make the attempt, let me beg of you to be unmindful of expence; I will lend you any ſum that may be requiſite, and you ſhall pay me with legal intereſt, when you regain your fortune:—but I am entirely againſt your attempting it in a low character.

I muſt inform you, that my father, as ſoon as he learnt your misfortune, was very urgent with me to invite you to ſpend this ſpring and ſummer at our houſe. My mother longs to ſee you, and would do every thing to make you happy; and my brother thinks you will come to oblige me, but the receipt of your letter made me give up the idea, and I fixed upon that of the little farm as a more eligible plan.

Farewell, my dear Julia,
I am truly your's,
EMILIA WATSON.

LETTER XXI.

Lord WILLIAM W—to Sir PHILIP EGERTON.

Paris.

My dear Sir Philip,

I Do not think the world ever knew a more miſerable man from the hour I loſt Miſs Benſon to the arrival of this expreſs: nor does the world at this moment contain an happier one. The great object of all my wiſhes to be found and accompliſhed at once—ſo unexpectedly! Good God, what joy is it to be thus recalled to life! Your whole management of this affair has been admirable; I am infinitely pleaſed with the trick you played her with the Duke, and that he ſaw and conver-

converſed with her in diſguiſe. I knew he would be exceſſively pleaſed with her.

I am on my road to Calais, with all the expedition I am maſter of. I have therefore no time for long letters, but I am ſorry that I give you the following anecdote.——I have juſt received a letter from an old ſervant, whom I diſcharged at Milan, and rewarded for his fidelity, wherein he informed me, that Signora Zaffini had departed ſome time ago, in a private manner, for England, and, leſt I ſhould fall into any further miſchief from her revenge, he gave me the intelligence. I do not like this at all, Sir Philip, that machinating ſpirit will play the devil, wherever ſhe goes; and if Miſs Benſon falls into her hands—Zounds! I am in agonies at the idea. Be all alive and watchful: You know not what an enemy ſhe is to deal with.

Adieu.

I remain your's truly,

WILLIAM W——,

(Carry the incloſed directly.)

LETTER XXII.

Lord WILLIAM W——, to Miſs BENSON.

(Incloſed in the preceding.)

MADAM,

SIR Philip Egerton has recalled me to life by informing me that you are in being, and ſtill Miſs Benſon. Thoſe cruel aſperſions which tore you from me; which gave me the appearance of the vileſt wretch, which threw me into deſpair, and almoſt into the jaws of death, have fallen heavier on me than language can expreſs. But I for-

get

get all my ſufferings at the idea of once more being ſupremely bleſſed in the company of the moſt amiable of her ſex.

Yes, my deareſt Julia, I return to you with a heart that never ceaſed being your's—and your's alone. Your image is engraven on it;—the only joy of my miſerable life has been the remembrance of the bleſſed hours I ſpent with you. I fly to you with all the ardours of unabated love,—with all the fervour of the trueſt paſſion that ever warmed the human breaſt.—Pray heaven I may find in my Julia the ſame tenderneſs that once made me the happieſt of mortals. I fly to throw myſelf at her feet.

WILLIAM W——

LETTER XXIII.

Mr. MELVIL to Mr. FREDERICK.

NOTHING ſure is ſo myſteriouſly ſtrange as every circumſtance of Miſs Benſon's hiſtory; ſhe ſeems formed to be the ſport of fortune, and your friend from his firſt acquaintance with her, has been toſſed about almoſt in the ſame manner. It was impoſſible I ſhould miſs falling violently in love with ſuch a woman conſtantly under my eye; and, when in love, how was it poſſible I ſhould eſcape miſery! Had I not been the greateſt idiot under heaven, I might have ſeen that I was perfectly indifferent to her. Though ſhe never gave the leaſt ſign of returning my paſſion, ſtill, like a true inamorato, I plunged deeper and deeper in the deluſion. Such was my fate! and it is now concluded with her ſlipping fairly out of my hands, and leaving me and every one elſe in the lurch. However, I have made one diſcovery,

diſcovery, which I muſt make good account of, and that is, that ſhe has had a tendreſſe with a young nobleman abroad, who is in love with her, but ſhe has, for God knows what reaſon, abſolutely rejected his ſuit—but I muſt acquaint you how I gained theſe particulars.

I told you in my laſt, that I had called at Miſs Benſon's in Pall-Mall, after what happened at the door of her priſon, and that her man informed me ſhe was gone, but expected at dinner; upon this I returned home, and waited again on her in the afternoon. I then found her houſe in much confuſion; ſhe was not returned; they could not conceive where ſhe was gone—all this I thought very ſtrange. I made enquiries. They told me ſhe had ſent John to Portman's-Square and Molly to the Strand; that the cook was in her kitchen, and the houſe-maid in the country on a viſit to her relations; that their miſtreſs had ſeemed to take that opportunity to go out; that Sir Philip Egerton had been there, and had raiſed a ſtorm to diſcover where ſhe was gone to. This intelligence I did not like. While I was thus queſtioning the ſervants, who ſhould appear but Sir Philip; he ſeemed ſtruck at my being there; aſked me my buſineſs in a tone rather deficient in politeneſs. I deſired to know his right of enquiring my buſineſs;—that my buſineſs was with Miſs Benſon. "Then (ſaid he) you know where ſhe is." "Not I truly; I come to enquire. But methinks you intereſt yourſelf very warmly in what concerns this lady."

"I have reaſon, Sir. And I muſt be allowed to expreſs my ſuſpicions that you alſo intereſt yourſelf much in her affairs; otherwiſe the lady's not being at home would ſend you from her door."

"Send me from her door!—Are you the guardian

guardian of her door? I prithee, Sir, no ſuch language. I have ever intereſted myſelf in the welfare of Miſs Benſon. I have the honour of being intimately acquainted with her."

"'Do you repeat my words? Zounds, Sir, let us retire and ſee who has the beſt right to be impertinent."

He was fired at this—and both of us kicking the gaping fools down ſtairs that ſtood looking at us, and turning the key on them, we drew immediately. Sir Philip ſcratched my left arm, and I gave him an ugly wound in his ſword-arm, which finiſhed the fray. Then addreſſing him;

"Now, Sir, before we part, it is abſolutely neceſſary we ſhould each of us explain his ſituation with reſpect to Miſs Benſon."

"That, Sir, is done in a moment. I am a mere friend; ſhe had an intimacy with a young nobleman in Italy, who will one day fill the higheſt rank in this country. Accidents broke the affair off for ſome time; but that nobleman is now on his return from Paris, to make propoſals of marriage to Miſs Benſon; and I flatter myſelf with her entire acquieſcence."

"I am ſatisfied, Sir."

"Now, Sir, can you give me any intelligence of her motions?"

"None, believe me. I know nothing of the matter."

I then took my leave, and returned home much chagrined at finding ſo much reaſon to believe that Miſs Benſon was engaged to another man. Frederick, believe me, it was a ſtroke that quite ſunk me with diſappointment—I was choaked—I could not ſpeak.

In the afternoon the lodging-woman, at whoſe houſe at Iſlington, Miſs Benſon had fixed Mrs.

and

and Miſs Sampher, came to me with a doleful face, to enquire after her. I told her I knew not where ſhe was—that ſhe was gone from her houſe privately, unknown to any one.

"Alas! aday, (ſaid ſhe) that ſad man, Sir George Milbourn, has played his pranks again with my poor lodgers."

"How ſo? I thought Miſs Benſon had paid him all his demand?"

"She did, Sir; but he has found out an old debt never thought of before, has bought it, and again thrown the mother into priſon, and carried off the daughter."

"D——— him for a raſcal."

"And when he came to the houſe he ſwore terribly he would be revenged on Miſs Benſon, that arrogant female, and the coxcomb that pretended to counteract him.' By G——, ſhe herſelf ſhall be a laſs in my ſeraglio before ſhe is much older," (ſaid he)—"them were his words.'

"When was this?"

"Only laſt night, Sir. I have been at Miſs Benſon's, and find that ſhe is gone, and all the houſe is in confuſion.—What a ſad man, Sir.!"

I was quite ſtupified with this intelligence. Thought I, ſhall ſhe be the ſport of ſuch a puppy as this baronet!—She muſt have deſigned returning to dinner, as the ſervant informed me, but was kidnapped by Sir George. It certainly muſt be ſo—every circumſtance confirms it. I was filled with indignation at this ſurmiſe. Nothing preſented itſelf to my imagination, but that the woman I loved to deſperation ſhould be in the power of a raſcal ſhe deteſted. I would have flown like lightning to reſcue her; but this ardour was damped by the idea, that I ſhould fight for others, not for myſelf.—Let the young nobleman,

or his friend Sir Philip, undertake the buſineſs. But love prevailed. I could fix on no plan that flattered me with a proſpect of being more bleſſed in her company.

Where Sir George lived I knew not; and I loſt ſome time in enquiries before I could find it out. At laſt, Menill told me it was in Hill-ſtreet, Berkely-ſquare. I put on my ſword, and was ordering Tom to follow me, when who ſhould appear but the young military hero Bob, whom Miſs Benſon had procured a commiſſion for! I told him the affair in a few words. The fire of gratitude flaſhed in his eyes; he was all eagerneſs—he would go with me—he would cut the throat of the baronet—he would—he would—and ſtepping in for his ſword, he marched off with me for his firſt rencontre, and Tom was left behind. I believe Bob would have fought a whole regiment to ſerve her; he has a better plea for his Quixotiſm than I have. But did you know the woman, you would forgive all the extravagance of your friend.

When we came to Sir George's, I was told that he was not at home. "I have particular buſineſs with your maſter, Sir, and I muſt ſee him."—"He is not at home, his man aſſured me. "Then where is he," aſked I? "He could not tell, but he believed he was in the country." "Then you may certainly know by the time when he went." He has not been at home (ſaid the man) ſince yeſterday." "Very well (replied I)--where is Sir George's villa, for I am ſure he would take it extremely ill of me, if I did not ſee him immediately." "It is at Wimbledon, Sir."

We then got into a poſt-chaiſe, and drove to Wimbledon; we enquired for his houſe, and as ſoon as I had fixed my eye upon it, I went to a

little

little hedge ale-house in sight, and seeing an ostler, asked if Sir George was at home; he said he did not know; —"what! (replied I) did he not come home last night?" "A fellow working on the road hearing this, said to me, Sir George came home in his coach, Sir, in the evening." "Very well, my friend, (replied I) but is he not gone out again?" "I have been here, Sir, from six this morning, and was here till eight last night, but have seen nothing of him." "Did he come home alone?" "No, Sir; there was a lady with him, the neighbours thought, muffled up in a cloak." "Aye, Sir, (said another workman) but we don't know whether it was a lady, for she did not seem much so." "Why, my lad?" "Lord, Sir, she gave Sir George a stroke upon the head, as if she had been in a passion; but she said nothing; we thought it a little odd, that a gentleman should be used so." "Pray, my lads, did she go into the house of her own accord, or did Sir George carry her in." "Sir George and the two servants handed her in."

Very good; this is plainly violence. Her mouth, I suppose, was stopped with a handkerchief, and they pushed her into the house as fast as they could. This, I doubted not, was Miss Sampher; and humanity dictated an attempt to rescue her; especially as the same opportunity would serve for discovering where Miss Benson was. We made immediately to the house, but observing a back way, where a person, seemingly a maid servant, had just entered; I walked to a door, and without knocking, lifted up the latch; luckily it was not locked; it led into a passage which we followed; when we had gone out of that, making as little noise as possible, we opened another door, which carried us into a small room like a butler's pantry. All this while we neither

heard nor ſaw any body. From thence another paſſage led us into a back hall, where was a gentleman's hat, ſome canes and a work-baſket; a door into a ſmall but very retired garden, was opened. It then came into my mind that the beſt plan of operation would be to conceal ourſelves, to ſee what chance might bring. With this idea we opened a door into a parlour, deſigning to look for a cloſet, or ſome paſſage that appeared proper for the purpoſe. The room was empty, and we could find no place to hide ourſelves in. We went into a ſecond apartment, the window ſhutters of which were not opened. This I thought favourable to us; in we went, and ſhut the door again. We had a view of every thing through the ſhutters of the garden; and I had the precaution to take the key out of the door, that I might ſecure a retreat into the room we had left. Thus planted in ambuſcade, we ſeated ourſelves very patiently, waiting for any thing that chance might throw in the way.

I believe we had ſat about three quarters of an hour, when hearing a noiſe in the other room, I planted myſelf at the key-hole to reconnoitre:—A woman of about fifty years of age, with as vile a countenance as ever hanged a thief, entered with Miſs Sampher in tears, ſhe puſhed her before her into the room, and forcing her into a chair ſhut the door behind her, and ſeating herſelf near her, began the following converſation, as near as I can recollect.

"Miſs! I am amazed that you ſhould know your own intereſt no better than to treat Sir George in ſuch a manner. It is in vain for you to perſiſt in refuſing him——you are abſolutely in his power, and had therefore much better

yield

yield with a good grace, or elſe he will have you by force.

"I will die firſt."

"Aye—aye—to be ſure that is fine language, but you'll be ſick of dying, take my word for it. But I ſay again you will be forced if you won't conſent with a good grace."

"I never will conſent—I have friends that will revenge this villainous uſage on all your crew."

"Yes—yes—you have friends to be ſure. There is Miſs Benſon, whom Sir George has got in limbo as well as you, ſhe will be your friend, certainly,—and your mother in a goal, dependant upon him; theſe are fine friends;—ſtarving, Miſs, will be your friend, if you don't be quiet."

"You may ſpare yourſelf all this trouble, for I once more tell you, I will hang, ſtarve, and die firſt;—I hate, abhor, and deteſt the villain —"

"Well, I ſhall leave you, and inform Sir George of this. I ſhall bring ſome help to undreſs you,—put you to bed directly, and hold you faſt enough, I warrant you, when you are in it."

"I ſhall find my remedy before that."

The End of the Firſt Volume.

yield with a good grace, or else he will have you by force.

"I will die first."

"Aye—aye—to be sure that is fine language, but you'll be sick of dying, take my word for it. But I say again you will be forced if you won't consent with a good grace."

"I never will consent—I have friends that will revenge this villainous usage on all your crew."

"Yes—yes—you have friends to be sure. There is Miss Benson, whom Sir George has got in limbo as well as you, she will be your friend, certainly,—and your mother in a goal, dependant upon him; these are fine friends;—Karving; Miss, will be your friend, if you don't be quiet."

"You may spare yourself all this trouble, for I once more tell you, I will hang, starve, and die first;—I hate, abhor, and detest the villain—"

"Well, I shall leave you, and inform Sir George of this. I shall bring some help to undress you,—put you to bed directly, and hold you fast enough, I warrant you, when you are in it."

"I shall find my remedy before that."

The End of the First Volume.